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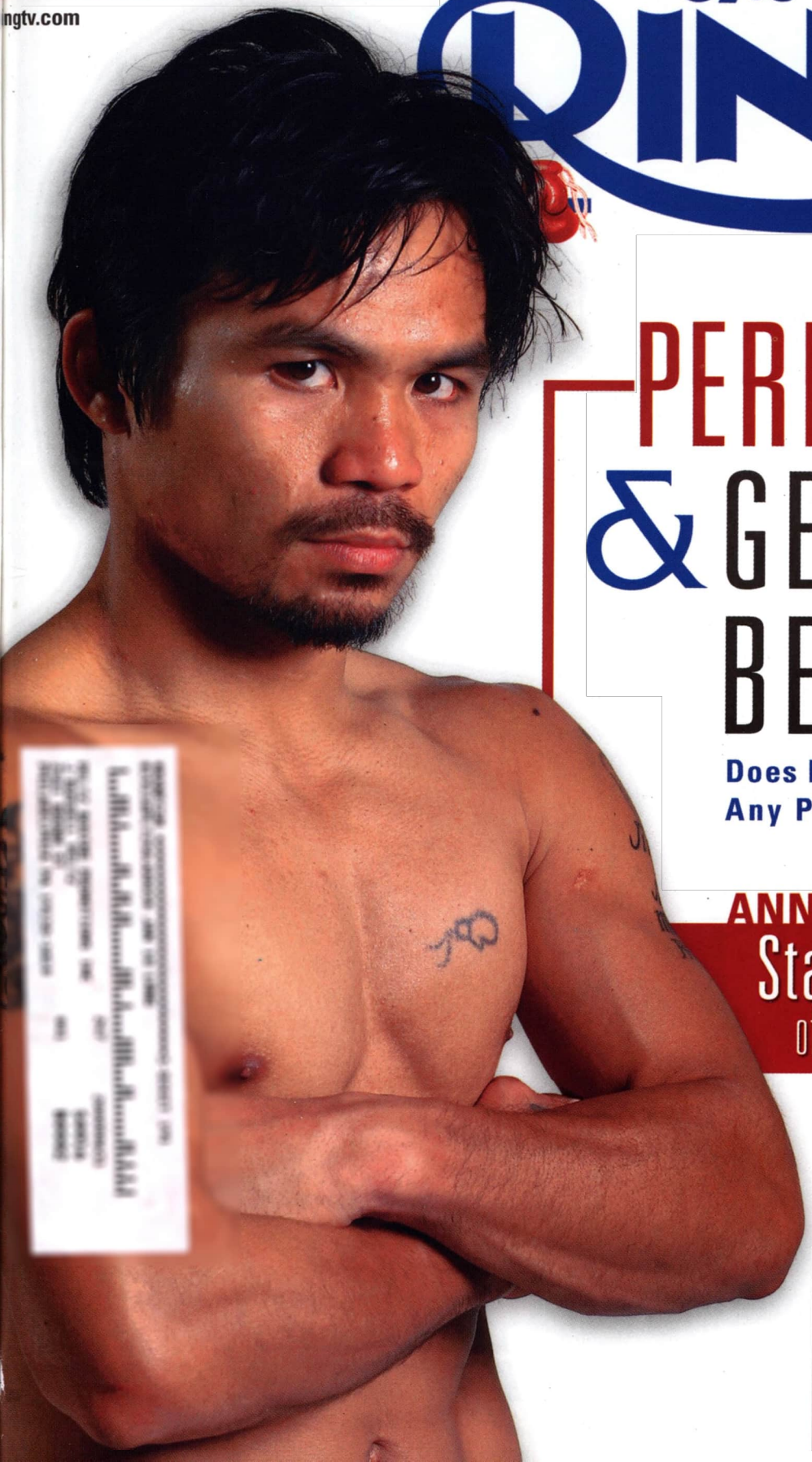

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Volume 88, No. 8 July 2009

The RING

A New Era For Oscar

I was in Europe on a holiday when Oscar De La Hoya announced his retirement from the ring. Normally, when I'm off-duty, I'm totally off-duty and never even think about checking the boxing websites that are a normal part of my workday routine.

For some reason I can't pinpoint, I made an exception this time, and borrowed a buddy's laptop the day after Oscar's scheduled press conference. Like most everybody else, I figured he was going to announce his retirement, but wanted to make sure.

Seeing images of his retirement speech on the Internet stirred up a batch of old De La Hoya memories. It's hard to believe it's been 17 years since he won an Olympic gold medal in Barcelona and that he is now a 36-year-old ex-fighter. I wonder if the time flew by as quickly for him as it did for me.

The way I see it, De La Hoya's career can be divided into four distinct periods, each with its own distinctive characteristics. The first stage was the true "Golden Boy Era," and began at the Olympics and continued through 1995, the year he won THE RING's Fighter of the Year award.

And what a year it was. De La Hoya, then a lithe, super fast, flame-throwing lightweight, beat John-John Molina, Rafael Ruelas, Genaro Hernandez, and Jesse James Leija, a talented quartet that boasted a combined record of 141-5-3. De La Hoya was a real stud back then, and don't let anybody tell you differently.

Next was the "Rock Star Era," an extended run that featured our handsome young hero starring in a series of pay-per-view bouts against aging stars such as Julio Cesar Chavez, Pernell Whitaker, and Hector Camacho. It reached its fighter-as-celebrity zenith when more than 45,000 people paid to watch Oscar chew up a French pastry named Patrick Charpentier in El Paso, Texas. Of course, nothing lasts forever (including unbeaten streaks), and this charmed existence ended when Oscar suffered his first loss, a controversial decision to Felix Trinidad in 1999.

The next three years were marked by a series of highs and lows, bracketed by a pair of losses to Shane Mosley and highlighted by his knockout of arch-rival Fernando Vargas. Let's call them the "Roller-Coaster Years." But despite the inconsistency, De La Hoya was still a damned good fighter and only his first loss to Mosley was beyond dispute.

Then came "The Long Goodbye," a span of five years in which Oscar lost three of his final five fights. The knockout loss to Bernard Hopkins was humbling and the points defeat to Floyd Mayweather exasperating. But the hammering by Manny Pacquiao was enough to send him headlong and permanently into the "Tycoon Era," a facet of his life that has frequently threatened to overshadow the fighter persona ever since he left Top Rank and formed Golden Boy Promotions.

It's hard to imagine where boxing would be today if De La Hoya hadn't appeared on the scene when he did. Many fighters have come and gone during his time at the top, but none of them could have given the sport as big a boost as The Golden Boy.

Unlike so many of our boxing heroes, De La Hoya will not fade from the scene or sink into poverty and neglect. He'll be front and center at most GBP cards, beating the promotional drum for another generation of fighters. I doubt if he'll even come across another quite like himself, but it's reassuring to know that he loves the sport that made him rich and famous enough to try.

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THE BIBLE OF BOXING

[Opening Shot]

Sealed With A Kiss

While Oscar De La Hoya sought the counsel of those closest to him, including Golden Boy CEO Richard Schaefer and wife Millie Corretjer, ultimately the decision to retire was Oscar's and Oscar's alone. At the conclusion of the emotional speech in Los Angeles, Millie was there to assure her husband that he had made the proper call.

PHOTO BY GABRIEL BOUYS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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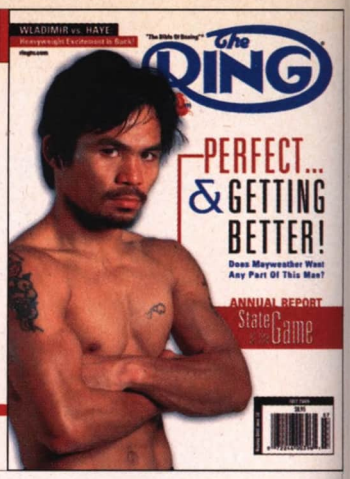

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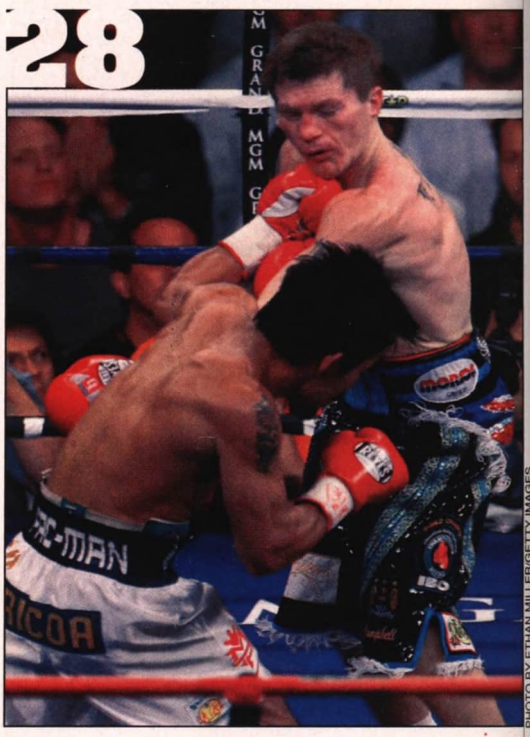

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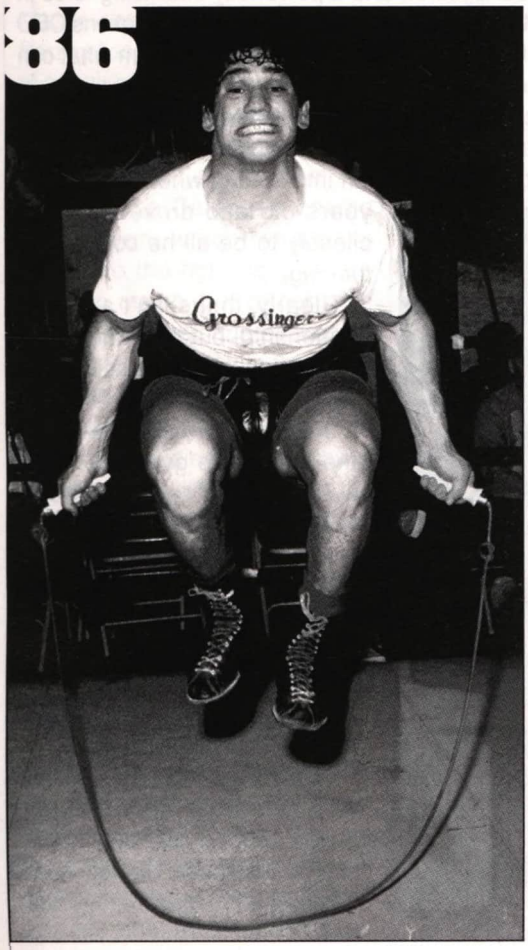
PHOTO BY RYAN PIERSE/GETTY IMAGES



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Goodbye, Golden Boy

Not far from a statue of himself, Oscar De La Hoya said goodbye to life as a boxer in the only way he could—on a grand scale.

Battling his emotions, a grim-faced "Golden Boy" announced his retirement on April 14 before an estimated 1,000 people—family, friends, journalists, and fans—in an open square in downtown Los Angeles.

For De La Hoya, the face of boxing for more than a decade, the decision wasn't an easy one, but it was the right one. He recognized that, at 36, he could no longer meet his own lofty standards.

"This is the love of my life," he said in an unsteady voice that boomed across Nokia Plaza, adjacent to Staples Center. "Boxing is my passion. Boxing is what I was born to do. And when I can't do it anymore, if I can't compete at the highest level, it's not fair to me, not fair to the fans, not fair to anybody. I've come to the conclusion that it's over."

A pall hovered over the gathering from the moment De La Hoya walked onto a makeshift stage to warm applause. Everyone there recognized that something special had come to an end, a career that transcended boxing.

And no one felt worse than De La Hoya. As the Golden Boy watched a video chronicling his life that was projected onto a giant wall of a nearby building, one could sense his pain.

The video began with his amateur boxing days as a child; took us through the gold medal in the 1992 Olympics, including his touching dedication to his late mother; and hit a crescendo with some of his most dramatic professional moments, complete with the deafening cheers of his adoring fans, cheers he would no longer hear.

"Now I understand why athletes have such a tough time retiring," he said.

Still, De La Hoya seemed to have no doubts. He had gone back and forth the past four months, since his brutal knockout loss to Manny Pacquiao in December.

Some of those closest to him insisted that it was time to focus his energy on his promotional firm, Golden Boy Promotions, and other business interests. After all, he had dominated boxing for so long, winning a gold medal at the Barcelona Olympics, winning 10 titles in six weight classes as a pro, and making hundreds of millions of dollars. What more could he accomplish?

Others suggested that his efforts to get down to 147 pounds to fight Pacquiao left him depleted, that it wasn't the real De La Hoya who fought that day, that he still had plenty of fight in him.

In the end, however, the embarrassment he endured that night convinced him that he is finished.

"Now that I've thought about that beating I took from Manny Pacquiao, I'm actually glad it happened because it made my decision that much easier," he said. "It convinced me that in a certain way, hey, that's it.

"You think that maybe you were drained, maybe you could do it again. Just go up in weight and you'll feel all right. You think about that stuff, about the positives and the negatives. I just decided, that's it; it's over."

De La Hoya fought back tears as he thanked those closest to him. He thanked his wife, Millie, the mother of two of his four children and a powerfully stabilizing force in his life. He thanked his friend, Golden Boy Promotions CEO Richard Schaefer, who has demonstrated to him what can still be achieved outside the ring.

However, the most-poignant moment was when he thanked his father, Joel De La Hoya Sr., a relentless taskmaster who pushed his son into boxing when he was five years old and drove him mercilessly to be all he could be in the ring.

Clearly, theirs isn't a perfect relationship, but the younger De La Hoya gave credit where credit was due.

"I remember times he would take me to the gym and never gave up on me," said De La Hoya, the emotion bubbling up. "We lived through some tough moments in the ring; we've been through everything. My father was always there for me. And we don't have enough time for me to express ... how much I appreciate that, how much I love him for that.

"Thank you, Father, for always being there for me and thank you for pushing as hard as you can," he continued, his voice now breaking and eyes filling with tears.

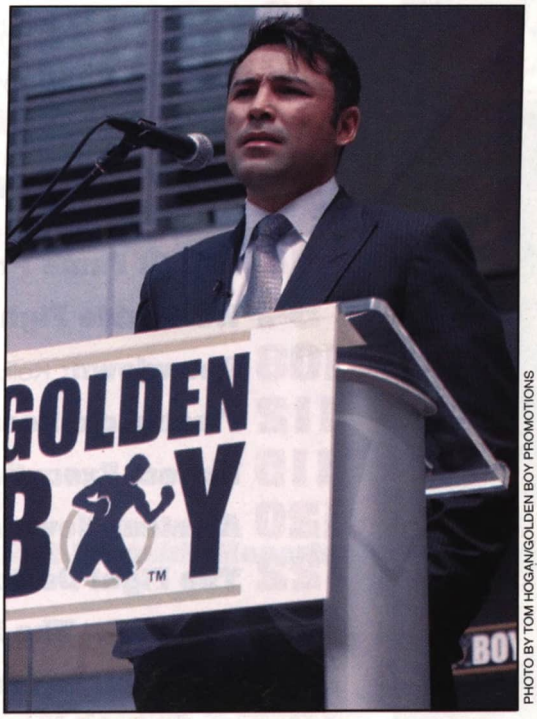


PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

De La Hoya gives an emotional retirement speech

Those who spoke about De La Hoya thanked him, too, for his devotion to his family and friends, for his many charitable endeavors, for his remarkable boxing career, and for what he has meant to the Mexican-American people, and to the city of Los Angeles, where he grew up.

Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa eloquently described what many think of their champion.

"He wasn't a young man born with a silver spoon in his mouth," Villaraigosa said. "He struggled, he fought for everything he had, both literally and metaphorically. Nothing was given to him on a silver platter. Both in the ring and on the streets, he fought to make his community and family proud. He defied the odds and reached the pinnacle of his profession. ... I think many of us remember watching him during the Olympics, feeling pride seeing one of our sons accomplish all that he did. I remember almost every fight and the pride I felt when he won. And even in the losses, he always showed courage.

"I can tell you, watching him, that Oscar is about to write a new chapter in a great life. Life has only just begun. The man is ready to make his mark in other areas."

So many fighters of the past have made the same announcement, but, seduced by the powerful high of hearing those cheers and the promise of more big paydays, decided later to give it another try. Could De La Hoya also fall victim?

He insists the answer is no.

"I promise to myself, I promise to my family, I promise to everyone that this is it," he said. "This is the end for me inside the ring."

—Michael Rosenthal

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Over a thousand showed up for De La Hoya's retirement announcement

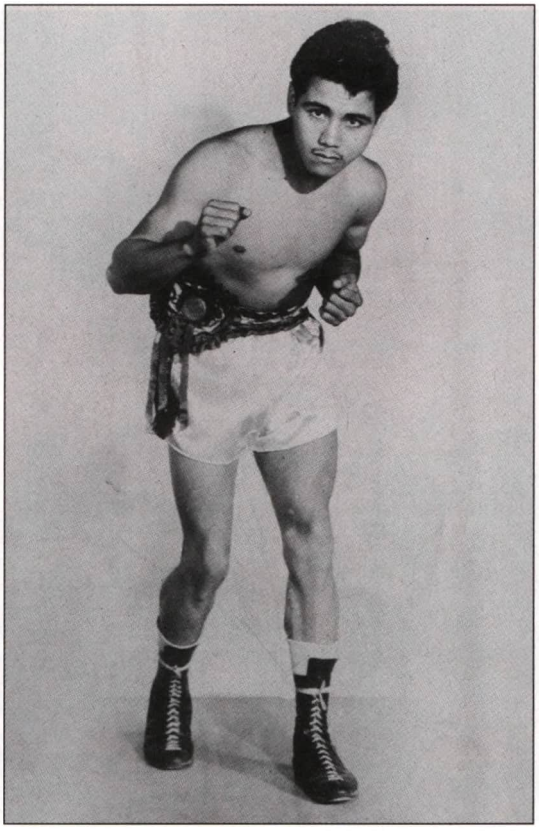
Raul Macias, 1937-2009

British sportswriter Peter Wilson wrote that when Raul Macias beat Chamroen Sangkitrat in 1955 for the National Boxing Association's bantamweight title, the "shrill screams of anguish, alarm, dismay, and horror drowned the normal sounds of the ringside" at San Francisco's Cow Palace.

They didn't come from officials of the California boxing commission, which refused to recognize the fight as a championship match, but rather from women scratched and pecked by live roosters tossed into the air by rejoicing Macias fans. After the fight ended in the 11th round, the national TV audience even saw a cop repeatedly whacked over the head with a gamecock as delirious Mexicans stormed the ring.

The fighter called "El Raton" (The Mouse) gave Mexico plenty to crow about—and opponents and livestock much to fear—in the 1950s.

Macias won numerous national amateur titles by the time he was 15. He got his nickname when someone saw the diminutive boxer skitter between the legs of a heavyweight with whom Macias was sparring. After representing Mexico in the 1952 Olympics, he became the national bantamweight champion in his fifth pro bout and an idol whose fights filled bullfight arenas as never before.



Fifty thousand fans saw Macias beat American Nate Brooks in Mexico City for the North American 118-pound title in 1954. They figured Macias and world champ Robert Cohen would draw a 100,000 there, but Cohen wasn't interested so the NBA paired Macias and Sangkitrat for its belt on March 9, 1955.

A successful defense against Leo Espinosa drew 60,000 fans in Mexico City (the largest attendance in boxing in '57), and even a non-title win there against Juan Cardenas attracted 50,000.

Macias lost a title unification match by decision to Alphonse Halimi in Los Angeles on November 6, 1957. He retired at 28 with a record of 41-2 (25).

A drawing card to the end, 5,000 mourners attended services after Macias died of cancer on March 23 at 74. There were cheers, music, and, it is hoped, a flying gamecock or two to celebrate the Mouse that made his compatriots roar.

—Pete Ehrmann

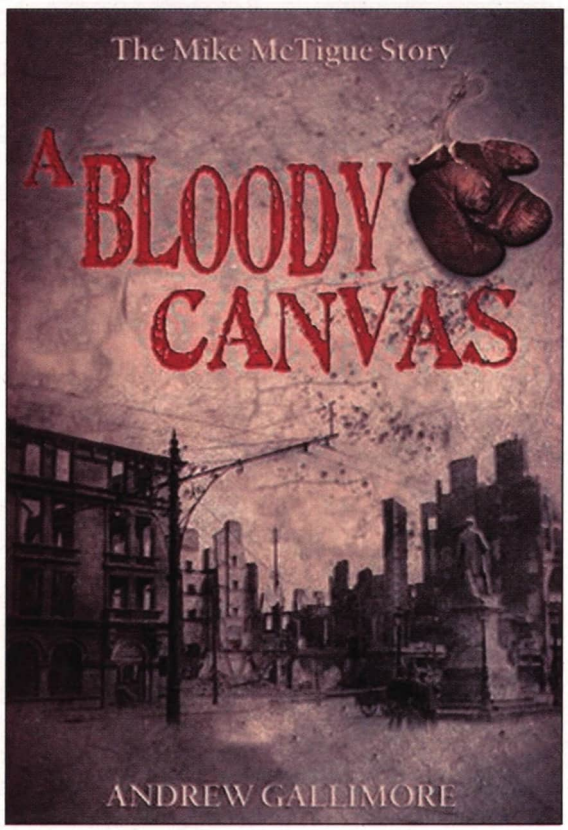
Winning a championship sometimes turns a good fighter into a great one, but it didn't work that way with Mike McTigue. After the Irishman not very surprisingly won the light heavyweight title from Battling Siki in Dublin on St. Patrick's Day, 1923, McTigue became one of the most unpopular champions of his time ("the worst lemon who ever drew on a boxing glove in public," wrote Paul Gallico). He was a talented, but safety-first boxer as unadventurous outside the ring as in it ("I'd rather face Dempsey than talk into that thing," he blurted when asked to speak into a radio microphone), and when he dropped the belt by decision to Paul Berlenbach a couple years later, Bash Boulevard resounded with loud hosannas.

Then a funny thing happened. McTigue got kayoed by Jack Delaney and discovered there were worst things than a hard punch in the chops. His subsequent free-swinging comeback didn't result in another title, but it did win for McTigue the cheers that never came during his dreary reign. (Gallico again: "One of the miracles of the prize ring.")

All this is told with great verve in *A Bloody Canvas: The Mike McTigue Story* (Mercier Press, 352 pages, paperback, £16.99), Andrew Gallimore's second first-rate biography of a long-ago boxing champion. The first one was about early 1914-17 lightweight king Freddie Welsh, and this one is equally absorbing and fun to read.

The McTigue-Siki fight is one of the most colorful and controversial in light heavyweight annals, and Gallimore's account is well researched and gripping. Old Mike's subsequent defense against Young Stribling in Columbus, Georgia, was another eye-popper not because of what happened in the ring itself, but rather the bizarre, fascinating circumstances surrounding the event, which are also entertainingly rendered.

Some might carp that Gallimore's use of long blocs of writing by Gallico, Westbrook Pegler, and other 1920s sportswriters is cheating, but they actually lend nice verisimilitude and flavor to the narrative. Gallimore's own prose is stylish and lyrical enough, though occasionally he overreaches ("The silver stitch in the cut he got in his fight with Siki shone in the glare of the lights," he writes about Georges Carpentier, taking a bow in the ring before McTigue-Siki. Carpentier had lost to Siki about seven months earlier. His stitches hadn't come out yet?).



"Fifty years from now," wrote Gallico in 1927 about McTigue's amazing turnabout, "the mild Irishman who turned knockout king will be one of the great stories of the ring." In Gallimore's skilled hands, it still is.

—Pete Ehrmann

***

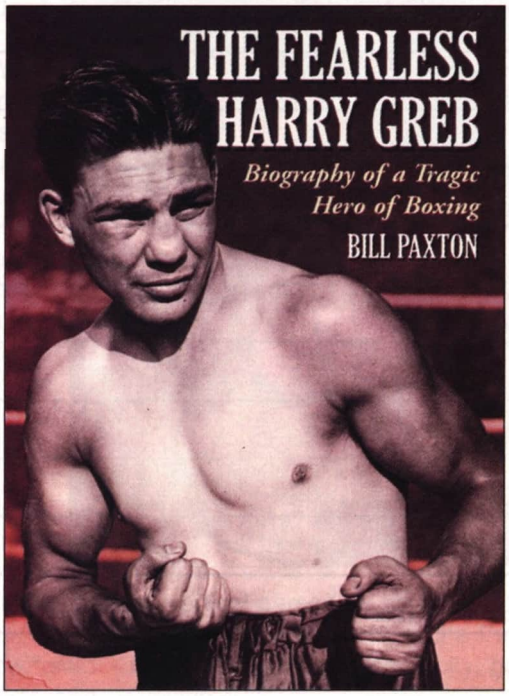
There may not be a huge audience out there for a biography of Harry Greb, but Bill Paxton has put together a good one. *The Fearless Harry Greb: Biography Of A Tragic Hero Of Boxing* (McFarland Publishing, 260 pages, paperback, $39.95) is a thorough compilation of anecdotes, fight accounts, family interviews, and ephemera from Greb's short but colorful life. It's less a biography than a massive attempt to gather all that is available on Greb into one neat package.

Paxton owns and operates the official Harry Greb website (harrygreb.com), and seems devoted to Greb with an almost monkish fervor. With no existing footage of Greb's fights, it's only through the diligent work of historians that his name is still alive. During the 1970s and '80s, when lists of the great middleweights were compiled, Greb's name was routinely at the lower end of the top 10. During the 1990s there was an ongoing reappraisal of Greb's place in the sport. Now he's routinely at or near the top slot. And why wouldn't he be? Greb had approximately 300 fights, and he was the only man to notch a win over Gene Tunney. In between, there was a U.S. Navy hitch during World War I, car accidents, the untimely death of his wife, and his battle with blindness.

Paxton is not a journalist, and he doesn't attempt to delve into Greb's psyche. Instead, he tastefully weaves the facts and myths into one crazy quilt of a life. Paxton is smart enough to realize that boxing lore rarely stands up to investigation, and the myths of Greb's life get straightened out pretty quickly. But Paxton also understands that when it comes to Greb, the lore is too much fun to ignore completely. The photographs are also fascinating (young Greb bears a slight resemblance to Kostya Tszyu).

Paxton only falters in that he worships Greb too much. The word "fearless" appears not only in the title, but also throughout the book. Paxton also glosses over some of Greb's less than sportsmanlike moments, which isn't necessary. Coloring Greb as

a noble fellow is almost as bad as when previous biographers depicted him as an insatiable playboy. Greb was probably not the high-flying hero of Paxton's book, nor was he the drunken dirtbag of previous biographical works. He was probably somewhere in the middle, a man of his generation, a man of the 1920s, when partying was sewn into the national fabric, especially if you were a famous athlete.



To understand Greb's spot in boxing history, you need only know this: Jack Dempsey was one of the greatest fighters of all-time. Tunney beat him. And Greb beat Tunney. If you need to know more, Paxton's book is a fine place to start.

—Don Stradley

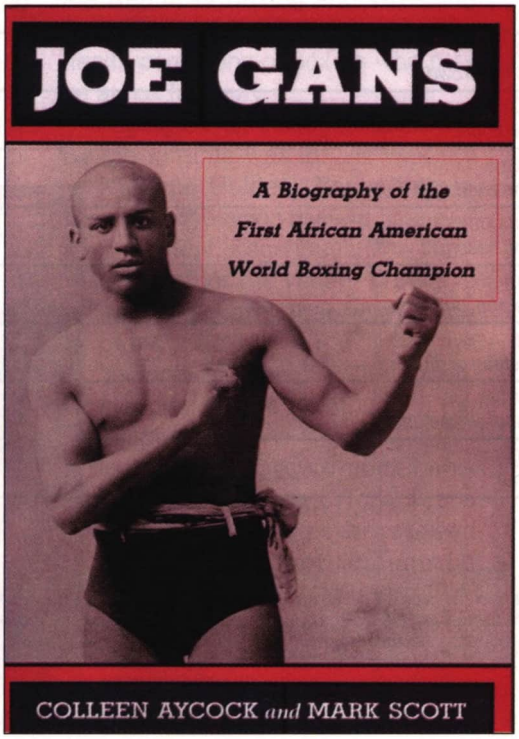
***

Nat Fleischer, the founder of this magazine, considered Joe Gans the greatest lightweight in ring history, called him "the closest thing to a superman" the division ever saw and "one of the most popular boxers that ever donned a glove." He also wrote that "no man ever conquered a tougher field than did Gans in winning his title. And in so doing, he demonstrated not only his ability to give, but to stand up under heavy punishment."

Yet, according to *Joe Gans: A Biography Of The First African-American World Boxing Champion* (McFarland Publishing, 294 pages, paperback, $39.95), Fleischer was single-handedly responsible for "blemishing Gans' character as dishonest" and "marring his legacy" to the point that the boxer known as "The Master" has been "relegated to the backwater of history."

Fleischer did all that, claim authors Colleen Aycock and Mark Scott, by writing in his 1938 book *Black Dynamite III* that Gans quit against Frank Erne after incurring a bloody gash near his right eye in the 12th round of their 1900 fight.

"His description is inconsistent with Gans' behavior and gives the impression that Gans lacked courage," say the pair, who accuse Fleischer of not only bad reportage, but of blatant racism responsible for "the character assassination of black fighters" to this very day.



The preposterous charge is one of many flaws in this relentlessly indignant and preachy biography whose determination to show that Gans was "a gentleman and a champion, a man who believed in a clean fight ... and no less than the greatest fighting machine who ever lived" would have benefited from stringent editing and a massive dose of dispassion. Gans was everything Fleischer said he was (and Aycock and Scott themselves admit that Gans' probably went in the tank against featherweight champion Terry McGovern, which, by the way, Fleischer put in the kindest possible light by saying Gans did it out of "a mistaken sense of loyalty to the manager who developed him"); but self-righteous fulmination, a stridently pedantic tone, overweening, fawning prose, and heavy-handed political correctness make this a tiresome and irritating slog through the life and career of one of boxing's finest champions.

The authors themselves acknowledge that "Gans' path may have strayed from the straight-and-narrow, but he found his way back in due time." (Fleischer said it first: "After he won the lightweight championship ... [Gans] shook himself loose from all crooked influences and thereafter his record was destined to be as clean as the proverbial 'hound's tooth'!") In the first Erne fight, write Aycock and Scott, "Gans had been temporarily blinded in the ring by the injury to the eye. Blindness was a realistic fear for Gans to have."

Which is *exactly* what Fleischer wrote in 1938: "... When one analyzes the situation without partisanship, he cannot help but feel that Gans was correct in saving his eyesight at the expense of victory."

Fleischer is an odd bogeyman for Aycock and Scott to construct and attack in their zeal to shed overdue light on a noble champion, and for them to do so undermines their credibility and purpose. That they went overboard is implicit in their own later acknowledgment of Fleischer as "the all-time greatest boxing writer" and "the masterly scholar."

I'm all for a full-blown Joe Gans renaissance. But Nat Fleischer sure as hell didn't make one necessary.

—Pete Ehrmann

TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By Martin Mulcahey

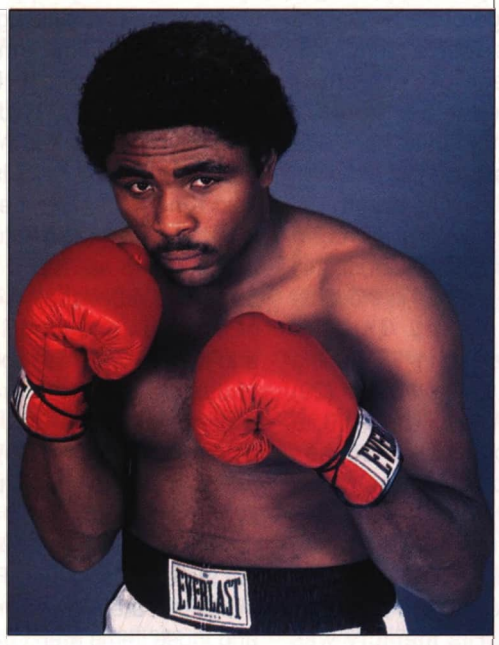
DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
03/20/09	Ruslan Provodnikov W 6 Esteban Almaraz	ESPN2	jw	C	C+	C+
	This kid fights like he never wants to go back to Siberia					
03/20/09	Fernando Beltran W 12 Miguel Roman	ESPN2	f	C+	B	B-
	Another case of crowds favoring an aggressor more than judges do					
03/21/09	Miguel Espino KO 6 Alejandro Garcia	TV Azteca	m	C+	C+	C+
	Playboy bunnies in the background made an average fight beautiful					
03/21/09	B.J. Flores W 10 Jose Luis Herrera	PPV	c	C+	D	C-
	Hot and cold Herrera was frigid against Flores					
03/21/09	Roy Jones KO 5 Omar Sheika	PPV	lhw	C+	D	C-
	This is a fight of importance only if it is Jones' last					
03/21/09	Vitali Klitschko KO 9 Juan Carlos Gomez	ESPN Classic	h	B+	C	C
	How can someone look so ordinary inflicting so much damage?					
03/27/09	John Molina KO 2 Carlos Vinan	ESPN2	l	C-	C	C
	Outgunned and outsized Vinan goes down swinging					
03/27/09	Eddie Chambers W 10 Samuel Peter	ESPN2	h	B+	B	C
	This pair boxed as if fighting to get out of the top 10, not into it					
03/28/09	Harry Joe Yorgey KO 9 Ronald Hearns	Showtime	jm	B-	B	B
	Son of Tommy inherited his father's physique … and chin					
03/28/09	Andre Dirrell W 10 Derrick Findley	Showtime	sm	C+	D	C-
	One of the few mismatches the ShoBox *series has booked*					
04/03/09	Diosbelys Hurtado W 12 Arturo Morua	Telemundo	w	C+	C+	B
	Comebacking Cuban wins last six rounds to edge mediocre opponent					
04/03/09	Mark Davis W 8 Steve Gonzalez	ESPN2	jl	C-	C	C
	Two-time amateur champ needs more punch in the pros					
04/03/09	Randall Bailey KO 4 Francisco Figueroa	ESPN2	jw	C+	C	B
	Who needs horror movies when we've got video of Bailey's right hand?					
04/04/09	Librado Andrade W 12 Vitali Tsypko	Showtime	sm	B	B-	C+
	Andrade is the world's best fighter in the 12th round					
04/04/09	Timothy Bradley W 12 Kendall Holt	Showtime	jw	A-	A	B
	Holt lands more effective punches; Bradley just lands more					
04/04/09	Rolando Reyes KO 5 Julio Diaz	PPV	l	B	B	B
	Last-minute opponent ruins Diaz' title hopes					
04/04/09	Vicente Escobedo W 10 Carlos Hernandez	PPV	l	B	C+	B+
	Escobedo wins the fight, but Hernandez wins the crowd					
04/04/09	Michael Katsidis KO 8 Jesus Chavez	PPV	l	B+	C+	C+
	Aussie had three too's: too big, too strong, too young					
04/04/09	Edwin Valero KO 2 Antonio Pitalua	PPV	l	A-	B+	B
	Valero's power could carry all the way up to heavyweight					
04/10/09	Hector Sanchez W 8 Demarcus Corley	ESPN2	jw	C+	B	D-
	Corley wears Predator mask into ring but soon becomes victim					
04/10/09	David Lopez W 12 Ossie Duran	ESPN2	jm	B	B-	C
	Is Lopez good enough to be ranked at middle and junior middle?					
04/11/09	Raul Garcia KO 6 Ronald Barrera	TV Azteca	jm	A-	B	C+
	Bad cut, but was Garcia using Slap Chops instead of gloves?					
04/11/09	Chris Arreola KO 4 Jameel McCline	HBO	h	B	C+	C
	Did McCline do enough to claim he "came out of retirement"?					
04/11/09	Paul Williams W 12 Winky Wright	HBO	m	A-	B+	C+
	You can't be Winky with both eyes swollen shut					

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Greg Page, 1958-2009



Since his last fight in 2001, Greg Page was confined to a wheelchair, and paralyzed down his left side. But that's not how those who saw the former WBA heavyweight titlist will remember him. They'll recall his spirited sparring sessions as a 15-year-old with fellow Louisville, Kentucky, native Muhammad Ali, and later Mike Tyson. They'll remember his victories over James "Bonecrusher" Smith, Renaldo Snipes, James Tillis, Scott LeDoux, Jimmy Young, and the highlight of his career, the eighth-round knockout of Gerrie Coetzee for the WBA title in 1981, in South Africa.

Page, 58-17-1 (48), died due to multiple complications from his boxing injuries and paralysis on April 27, 2009, at his Louisville home. He was 50.

"He's in a better place now," said Patricia Page, Greg's wife who had stayed by his side since his tragic fight with Dale Crowe, on March 9, 2001. Page, then 42, received $1,500 to meet Crowe, then 24 and considered a viable heavyweight prospect.

Page suffered brain injuries during the fight, after being knocked out in 10th round and never recovered. Page later suffered a stroke during surgery.

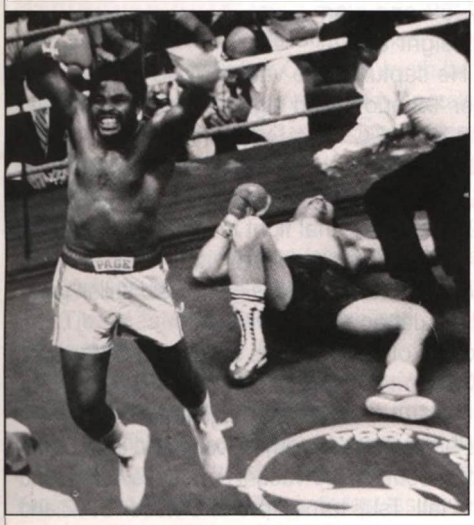
The bout caused a great stir in the boxing community due to the lack of medical personnel present at the fight, which took place at the Peels Palace in Erlanger, Kentucky, near Cincinnati.

As a result, the Page family won a $1.2-million settlement in 2007 with the state of Kentucky. The Crowe-Page fight also forced Kentucky officials to establish a medical review panel for the Kentucky Boxing and Wrestling Authority, responsible for checking the health conditions of boxers who may be at risk for injury.

Page grew up boxing in Louisville. By the time he was 20, he was the National Golden Gloves heavyweight champion in 1978.

In 1984, Page fought Tim Witherspoon for the vacant WBC title and lost. Later that year, Page came back to finish what he couldn't do against Witherspoon, stopping the South African in the eighth round.

Page lost the WBA belt in his first title defense, to Tony Tubbs in April '85. Page never received another title shot, though he continued to fight, taking a two-year hiatus between 1993-95. He fought all the way until October 2000 before coming back after a six-month layoff to meet Crowe.



Page during his most glorious moment, downing Coetzee

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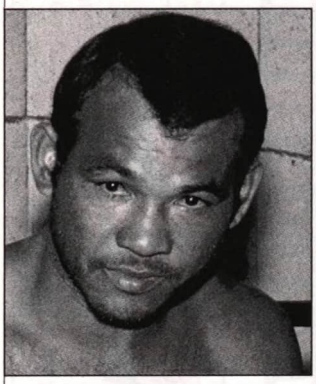
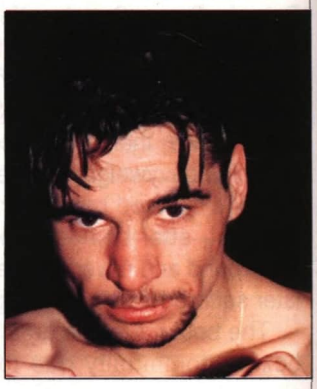
Outside the Ropes

Alfredo Marcano, a former WBA super featherweight titlist in the early-1970s, died at the age of 62 on April 5 after a long bout with cancer. Viewed as a "safe" opponent, Marcano scored a 10th-round stoppage of WBA super feather beltholder **Hiroshi Kobayashi** in July 1971. He lost in his second title defense, to Ben Villaflor in March '72. In September '74, Marcano received another title shot, this time being stopped in the ninth round by **Bobby Chacon**. Marcano retired in '75, ending his career with a 44-11-5 (29) mark ... **Artie Curry**, 49, a beloved behind-the-scenes figure in boxing, was found dead April 8 in his New York City apartment. Curry worked as the relations manager of HBO's sports talent. A 20-year employee of HBO, Curry worked his way up the company ranks after starting in the mailroom. His memory was honored with the ceremonial 10-count salute prior to HBO's broadcast of the April 11 bout featuring **Paul Williams** and **Winky Wright**. No cause of death was reported ... Approximately 11.5 million television viewers (55 percent of all TV viewers at that time) watched the **Vitali Klitschko-Juan Carlos Gomez** WBC heavyweight bout on German TV channel RTL ... Veteran heavyweight **Jameel McCline** has been appointed as Director of Wellness Services at SeaSide Palm Beach, a luxury wellness retreat that specializes in recovery from substance abuse ... Promoter **Don King** has filed a protest with the British Boxing Board of Control, the WBO, and the WBA on behalf of **Marco Antonio Barrera**, claiming Barrera's March 14 bout with **Amir Khan** in Manchester, England, should have been stopped in the first round and declared a no-contest because of the deep cut on Barrera's scalp, which was caused by an accidental clash of heads. The fight was stopped by referee **Dave Parris** at 2:36 of the fifth round, at which time the fight went to the scorecards and Khan was declared the winner by technical decision. Had the bout been stopped before the completion of the fourth round, it would have been ruled a no-contest. "Amir Khan is in possession of a tainted victory," said King. "The referee and doctor should have stopped the fight immediately after that incredible clash of heads" ... According to state and federal records, **Thomas Hearns**, 50, owes more than $448,000 in back taxes. The state of Michigan and the IRS have filed liens against Hearns and his wife ... The report from the California Department of Justice laboratory has confirmed that the handwraps confiscated from **Antonio Margarito** prior to his January 24 bout with **Shane Mosley** contained calcium and sulfur, two ingredients of plaster of paris. "The [California State Athletic] Cmmission's decision appears to be supported by that report," said **Karen Chappele**, the attorney who presented the state's case at the February 10 hearing. "The only two things that are allowed in the handwraps are gauze and tape, and those items aren't gauze and tape" ... Four boxers from Zimbabwe were banned from competing in a WBO event in Namibia when it was discovered they had tampered medical certificates. The four banned boxers are **Isaac Phonkeni**, **Master Kachigwada**, **Blessing Moleni**, and **Tom Fernando** ... Former WBO 140-pound titleholder **Giovanni Parisi**, 41, was killed in an automobile accident near his hometown of Voghera, Italy, on March 25 when the car he was driving collided head on with a truck. Parisi, who won the featherweight gold medal at the 1988 Olympics, turned pro in February '89 and won the Italian lightweight title in September '91. He captured the vacant WBO junior welter title in September '92 and tallied eight successful defenses before losing the belt to **Carlos Gonzalez** in May '98. He challenged **Julio Cesar Chavez** for the WBC version of the title in April '95, losing a 12-round decision in Las Vegas. Parisi, 41-5-1 (29), had his final fight in October '06, losing a close decision to European welterweight titlist **Frederic Klose**. "[Parisi] was in a league of his own," said Italian great **Nino Benvenuti** ... Japanese strawweight **Masatate Tsuji**, 30, died on March 24 of head injuries suffered in a March 21 bout with **Yuji Kanemitsu**, 12-1 (7), in Tokyo. According to THE RING's **Joe Koizumi**, southpaw Tsuji had swept almost all of the rounds before he abruptly succumbed in the 10th and final round of a bout for the vacant Japanese 105-pound belt at Korakuen Hall. Tsuji turned pro in October 2002 and left a pro record of 12-1-1 (3).



Marcano: Former super featherweight titlist dies at 62



Parisi: Killed in auto crash

Quotable

"It's like a weight has been lifted from Miguel's back. Miguel hasn't had a trainer the last couple of years because he and Evangelista haven't talked to each other."

—Top Rank promoter Bob Arum on Miguel Cotto's firing of his uncle Evangelista as trainer after a physical confrontation

"Just because he's not working my corner doesn't mean he's still not my father."

—IBF flyweight titleholder Nonito Donaire after replacing his father, Nonito Sr., with Dodie Boy Penalosa as his new chief trainer prior to fighting challenger Raul Martinez

[Ratings Analysis]

For Period Ended May 3, 2009

Heavyweights: Eddie Chambers debuts at six, while Samuel Peter (seventh last issue) exits. Sultan Ibragimov (sixth last issue), Oleg Maskaev (eighth last issue), and Juan Carlos Gomez (ninth last issue) all depart. Chris Arreola enters at seven, Alexander Dimitrenko (10th last issue) moves to eight, David Haye debuts at nine, and John Ruiz returns at 10.

Super Middleweights: Carl Froch (sixth last issue) leaps to three after stopping Jermain Taylor (fifth last issue), who falls to nine. Librado Andrade (third last issue) and Anthony Mundine (fourth last issue) each drop one, while everyone rated six through nine jumps up one spot.

Middleweights: Paul Williams debuts at five. Williams' inclusion expels John Duddy.

Junior Middleweights: Cory Spinks (fourth last issue) trades places with Verno Phillips (third last issue) after beating Deandre Latimore. James Kirkland (currently nine) remains until his weapons charge is decided.

Welterweights: Manny Pacquiao comes out to fight at junior welterweight. Everyone six to 10 moves up one and enables Vyacheslav Senchenko to debut at 10.

Junior Welterweights: Pacquiao is world champion after stopping Ricky Hatton, who drops to two. Everyone previously rated two to nine drops one place. Nate Campbell departs.

Lightweights: Edwin Valero enters at three after stopping Antonio Pitalua (fifth last issue). Rolando Reyes debuts at four after stopping Julio Diaz (fourth last issue). Both Julio Diaz and Pitalua exit. Michael Katsidis (seventh last issue) jumps to five, and everyone who had been ranked eight through 10 move up one, making room for Amir Khan.

Junior Lightweights: With Valero (first last issue) now at lightweight, Humberto Soto (second last issue) moves to number one. Malcolm Klassen takes over at two after stopping Cassius Baloyi (third last issue), who drops to five. The changes move Mzonke Fana (fourth last issue) and Roman Martinez (fifth last issue) up one place each.

Featherweights: Choi Tseveenpurev (10th last issue) exits due to inactivity, replaced by Yuriorkis Gamboa at 10.

Junior Featherweights: Bernard Dunne enters at seven after stopping Ricardo Cordoba (seventh last issue), who falls to 10. Toshiaki Nishioka exits.

Bantamweights: Gerry Penalosa (sixth last issue) drops to 10 after losing to junior featherweight contender Juan Manuel Lopez. Abner Mares (seventh last issue) moves to six, and Nehomar Cermeno (ninth last issue) jumps two places to seven. Fernando Montiel enters at nine. William Gonzalez (10th last issue) exits.

Junior Bantamweights: Jose Navarro (fourth last issue) departs, moving everyone rated five through nine up one. Hugo Cazares enters at nine, and Simphiwe Nongqayi comes in at 10, replacing Raul Martinez, who exits after getting stopped by Nonito Donaire.

Flyweights: Jose Lopez (seventh last issue) departs for junior bantamweight. Koki Kameda (eighth last issue) moves to seven, and Moruti Mthalane (10th last issue) jumps to eight. Bernard Inom and Julio Cesar Miranda make their ratings debuts at nine and 10.

Junior Flyweights: Brian Viloria leaps to one after stopping Ulises Solis (first last issue), who drops to four. Everyone from four through 10 moves down one spot. Edren Dapudong is in at 10 after stopping Bert Batawang (ninth last issue), who exits.

Pound-for-pound: Shane Mosley (fifth last issue) switches with Israel Vazquez. Ivan Calderon (seventh last issue) and Ricky Hatton (eighth last issue) come out, replaced by Miguel Cotto at seven and Nonito Donaire at eight. Vic Darchinyan (10th last issue) switches with Celestino Caballero (ninth last issue).

The RING®
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Pound-For-Pound

1. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Welterweight
2. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Lightweight
3. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
4. **Shane Mosley**
   Welterweight
5. **Israel Vazquez**
   Junior Featherweight
6. **Rafael Marquez**
   Junior Featherweight
7. **Miguel Cotto**
   Welterweight
8. **Nonito Donaire**
   Flyweight
9. **Vic Darchinyan**
   Junior Bantamweight
10. **Celestino Caballero**
    Junior Featherweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **ringtv.com**

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended May 3, 2009

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between THE RING's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

THE RING Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of THE RING Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at ringtv.com.

Records provided by boxrec.com.

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Super middleweight Carl Froch bolts to three after blasting out Jermain Taylor

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 52-3 (46)
2. **VITALI KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 37-2 (36)
3. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV** Uzbekistan 25-0-1 (17)
4. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN** Russia 17-0 (12)
5. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 50-1 (34)
6. **EDDIE CHAMBERS** Philadelphia, PA 34-1 (18)
7. **CHRIS ARREOLA** Riverside, CA 27-0 (24)
8. **ALEXANDER DIMITRENKO** Ukraine 29-0 (19)
9. **DAVID HAYE** England 22-1 (21)
10. **JOHN RUIZ** Chelsea, MA 43-8-1 (29)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **VERNON FORREST** Atlanta, GA 41-3 (29)
2. **PAUL WILLIAMS** Augusta, GA 37-1 (27)
3. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 37-5 (11)
4. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Belize 42-12-1 (21)
5. **SERGIO MARTINEZ** Argentina 44-1-2 (24)
6. **SERGIO MORA** Los Angeles, CA 21-1-1 (5)
7. **SERGEI DZINZIRUK** Ukraine 36-0 (22)
8. **DANIEL SANTOS** Puerto Rico 32-3-1 (23)
9. **JAMES KIRKLAND** Austin, TX 25-0 (22)
10. **JOACHIM ALCINE** Haiti 30-1 (19)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 42-0-2 (22)
2. **STEVEN LUEVANO** La Puente, CA 36-1-1 (15)
3. **JORGE SOLIS** Mexico 37-1-2 (27)
4. **ROCKY JUAREZ** Houston, TX 28-4 (20)
5. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 28-1-2 (20)
6. **MARIO SANTIAGO** Puerto Rico 19-1-1 (14)
7. **MARTIN HONORIO** Mexico 25-4-1 (13)
8. **TAKAHIRO AOH** Japan 17-1-1 (8)
9. **CRISTOBAL CRUZ** Mexico 38-11-1 (23)
10. **YURIORKIS GAMBOA** Cuba 15-0 (13)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: ISRAEL VAZQUEZ Mexico 43-4 (31)

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 37-5 (33)
2. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 32-2 (22)
3. **JUAN MANUEL LOPEZ** Puerto Rico 25-0 (23)
4. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM** Thailand 38-1 (27)
5. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 36-2 (31)
6. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 28-1 (11)
7. **BERNARD DUNNE** Ireland 28-1 (15)
8. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 40-6 (34)
9. **RENDALL MUNROE** England 18-1 (7)
10. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 34-2-2 (21)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 26-2 (10)
2. **ANSELMO MORENO** Panama 25-1-1 (8)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 21-2-2 (7)
4. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 22-2 (18)
5. **JOSEPH AGBEKO** Ghana 26-1 (22)
6. **ABNER MARES** Mexico 18-0 (11)
7. **NEHOMAR CERMENO** Venezuela 17-0 (10)
8. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ** Panama 27-3 (20)
9. **FERNANDO MONTIEL** Mexico 39-2-1 (29)
10. **GERRY PENALOSA** Philippines 54-7-2 (36)

Cruiserweights

Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: TOMASZ ADAMEK
Poland 37-1 (25)

1. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 21-2 (11)
2. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 41-2 (31)
3. **GUILLERMO JONES**
Panama 36-3-2 (28)
4. **FIRAT ARSLAN**
Germany 29-4-1 (18)
5. **MARCO HUCK**
Yugoslavia 24-1 (19)
6. **VADIM TOKAREV**
Russia 26-1-1 (19)
7. **GIACOBBE FRAGOMENI**
Italy 26-1 (10)
8. **TROY ROSS**
Canada 21-1 (15)
9. **OLA AFOLABI**
England 14-1-3 (6)
10. **MATT GODFREY**
Providence, RI 18-1 (10)

Light Heavyweights

Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 49-5-1 (32)
2. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 27-0 (17)
3. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Jamaica 49-12-2 (33)
4. **ANTONIO TARVER**
Orlando, FL 27-5 (19)
5. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 30-0 (17)
6. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 53-5 (39)
7. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 42-4-1 (24)
8. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
Romania 27-0 (15)
9. **HUGO GARAY**
Argentina 32-3 (17)
10. **YUSAF MACK**
Philadelphia, PA 27-2-2 (16)

Super Middleweights

Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 41-1 (31)
2. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Romania 24-0 (19)
3. **CARL FROCH**
England 25-0 (21)
4. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 28-2 (21)
5. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 35-3 (23)
6. **SAKIO BIKA**
Cameroon 27-3-2 (17)
7. **ALLAN GREEN**
Tulsa, OK 28-1 (20)
8. **KAROLY BALZSAY**
Hungary 21-0 (15)
9. **JERMAIN TAYLOR**
Little Rock, AR 28-3-1 (17)
10. **DENIS INKIN**
Russia 34-1 (24)

Middleweights

Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: KELLY PAVLIK
Youngstown, OH 35-1 (31)

1. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Armenia 29-0 (23)
2. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 32-2-1 (14)
3. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 30-3 (15)
4. **KHOREN GEVOR**
Armenia 30-3 (16)
5. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 37-1 (27)
6. **RANDY GRIFFIN**
Louisville, KY 24-2-3 (12)
7. **DAVID LOPEZ**
Mexico 38-12 (23)
8. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 62-8-1(43)
9. **AMIN ASIKAINEN**
Finland 26-2 (17)
10. **DANIEL GEALE**
Australia 21-0 (13)

Welterweights

Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 46-5 (39)
2. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 33-1 (27)
3. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 37-6 (27)
4. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
Ghana 35-2 (20)
5. **CARLOS QUINTANA**
Puerto Rico 26-2 (20)
6. **ANDRE BERTO**
Winter Haven, FL 24-0 (19)
7. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 29-4 (14)
8. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 37-6 (25)
9. **ISAAC HLATSWAYO**
South Africa 28-1-1 (10)
10. **VYACHESLAV SENCHENKO**
Ukraine 29-0 (20)

Jr. Welterweights

Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: MANNY PACQUIAO
Philippines 49-3-2 (37)

1. **TIMOTHY BRADLEY**
Palm Springs, CA 24-0 (11)
2. **RICKY HATTON**
England 45-2 (32)
3. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 37-2-2 (22)
4. **ANDREAS KOTELNIK**
Ukraine 31-2-1 (13)
5. **PAUL MALIGNAGGI**
Brooklyn, NY 26-2 (5)
6. **JUAN URANGO**
Colombia 21-1-1 (16)
7. **KENDALL HOLT**
Paterson, NJ 25-3 (13)
8. **RICARDO TORRES**
Colombia 32-2 (28)
9. **HERMAN NGOUDJO**
Cameroon 17-3 (9)
10. **MARCOS MAIDANA**
Argentina 25-1 (24)

Lightweights

Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ
Mexico 50-4-1 (37)

1. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 34-2 (17)
2. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
Cuba 36-4-1 (22)
3. **EDWIN VALERO**
Venezuela 25-0 (25)
4. **ROLANDO REYES**
Mexico 31-4-2 (20)
5. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
Australia 25-2 (21)
6. **ALI FUNEKA**
South Africa 30-2-2 (25)
7. **YURI ROMANOV**
Belarus 21-2 (14)
8. **BREIDIS PRESCOTT**
Colombia 21-0 (18)
9. **ANTHONY PETERSON**
Washington, DC 28-0 (19)
10. **AMIR KHAN**
England 20-1 (15)

Jr. Lightweights

Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
Mexico 48-7-2 (31)
2. **MALCOLM KLASSEN**
South Africa 24-4-2 (15)
3. **MZONKE FANA**
South Africa 28-4 (11)
4. **ROMAN MARTINEZ**
Puerto Rico 22-0-1 (13)
5. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
South Africa 36-4-1 (19)
6. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 47-4-1 (34)
7. **URBANO ANTILLON**
Mexico 26-0 (19)
8. **JORGE LINARES**
Venezuela 26-0 (17)
9. **NICKY COOK**
England 29-2 (16)
10. **ROBERT GUERRERO**
Gilroy, CA 23-1-1 (16)

Jr. Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Armenia 32-1-1 (26)
2. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 32-3 (27)
3. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
Japan 13-1 (8)
4. **Z GORRES**
Philippines 29-2-2 (16)
5. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 51-5-1 (39)
6. **DIMITRI KIRILOV**
Russia 29-4-1 (9)
7. **KOHEI KONO**
Japan 23-4 (8)
8. **DAIKI KAMEDA**
Japan 13-1 (10)
9. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 28-5-1 (20)
10. **SIMPHIWE NONGQAYI**
South Africa 15-0 (6)

Flyweights

Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **NONITO DONAIRE**
Philippines 21-1 (14)
2. **DAISUKE NAITO**
Japan 34-2-3 (22)
3. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 72-3-1 (38)
4. **DENKAOSAN KAOVICHIT**
Thailand 46-1-1 (20)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 29-0-2 (18)
6. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 33-5-2 (15)
7. **KOKI KAMEDA**
Japan 20-0 (13)
8. **MORUTI MTHALANE**
South Africa 23-2 (16)
9. **BERNARD INOM**
France 19-1-1 (10)
10. **JULIO CESAR MIRANDA**
Mexico 29-4-1 (22)

Jr. Flyweights

Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: IVAN CALDERON
Puerto Rico 32-0 (6)

1. **BRIAN VILORIA**
Waipahu, HI 25-2 (15)
2. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 35-5 (19)
3. **GIOVANNI SEGURA**
Mexico 20-1-1 (16)
4. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 28-2-2 (20)
5. **CESAR CANCHILA**
Colombia 27-2 (21)
6. **JUANITO RUBILLAR**
Philippines 46-11-7 (22)
7. **OMAR NINO**
Mexico 27-3-1 (11)
8. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 25-5-2 (14)
9. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
Argentina 19-1 (10)
10. **EDREN DAPUDONG**
Philippines 14-2 (8)

Strawweights

Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
Nicaragua 23-0 (20)
2. **RAUL GARCIA**
Mexico 26-0-1 (16)
3. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
Thailand 30-0 (12)
4. **FLORANTE CONDES**
Philippines 23-4-1 (20)
5. **MILAN MELINDO**
Philippines 18-0 (5)
6. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 62-7-5 (31)
7. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 23-3 (9)
8. **DONNIE NIETES**
Philippines 24-1-3 (14)
9. **NKOSINATHI JOYI**
South Africa 19-0 (15)
10. **JUAN PALACIOS**
Nicaragua 25-2 (20)

By Jeff Ryan

Word Police! Come Out With Your Hands Up!

It's a good thing the National Collegiate Athletic Association has its priorities in order. College football powerhouses suit up ineligible players, basketball boosters hand envelopes full of cash to recruits touring their campuses, athletic dorms house more hardened criminals than a Cleveland crack house, and yet, the good old law-and-order NCAA focuses its attention on ... Roy Jones?

That's right. In March, college sports' most powerful ruling body threatened Jones' Square Ring Promotions with legal action because the company had the nerve to nickname its boxing/mixed martial arts card, "March Badness."

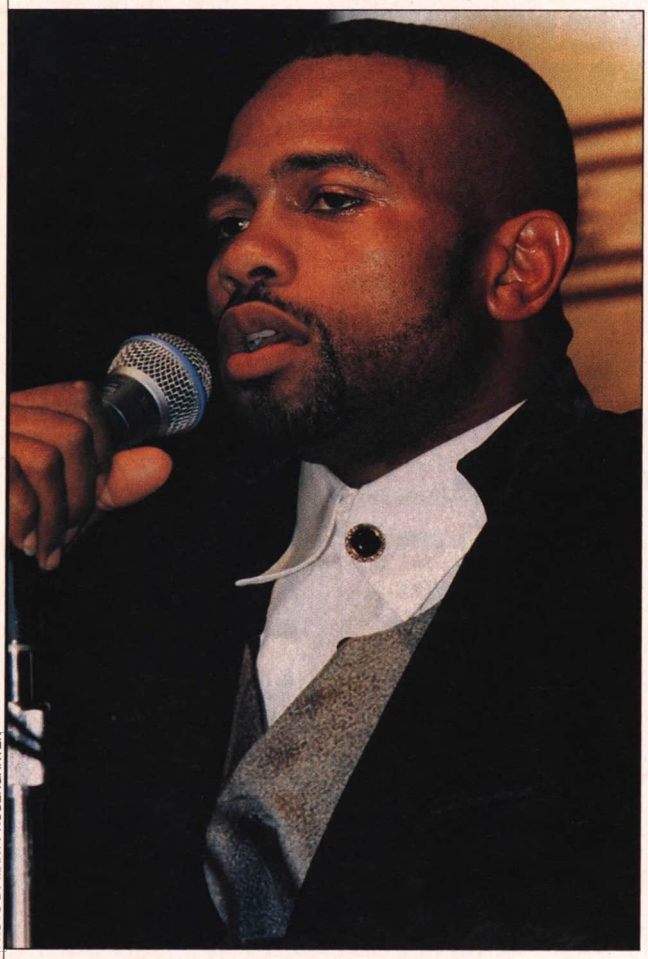


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Roy Jones grabbed the attention of the NCAA, which drew the wrath of Ryan

Apparently, the NCAA feared the public would confuse gloved guys punching each other and barefoot guys kicking each other with "March Madness," college hoopsters dribbling and dunking in quest of the National Championship.

Never mind that previous boxing cards, as well as a motorcycle event, have used the "March Badness" title. The NCAA word police, for whatever reason, decided that this was where they were going to draw the line. Are we to assume that "March Gladness" and "March Sadness" are henceforth off-limits too? Here's hoping that the North Carolina Aardvark Admirers or the Naomi Campbell Anorexia Academy inform the nickname nazis that the letters, "NCAA," are already taken and that the subpoena is in the mail.

In the meantime, to prevent any future problems with this sort of thing, allow me to suggest that boxing avoid using the following phrases for fear of legal action from the NCAA or some other thin-skinned heavyweight of the sports world:

The Final Four: If "March Badness" could cause so much trouble, then let's not even dream of messing with this one. Promoters will just have to come up with some other name for the quartet that advanced to the semifinals of the strawweight unification tournament after Thailand's Oleydong Sithsamerchai won the Far East Regional.

The Seven Blocks Of Granite: This reference to the Fordham University offensive line of 1936 (on which Vince Lombardi played guard) is one of the great ones of all-time. And it's safe to assume that it's jealously guarded. So boxing columnists would be well advised to not use it to describe a) the chins of Bernard Hopkins, Tomasz Adamek, Winky Wright, Mikkel Kessler, Vitali Klitschko, Manny Pacquiao, and Roman Gonzalez, b) the brains of the WBA ratings committee members, or c) a collection of Antonio Margarito's handwraps.

The 12th Man: Gridiron fans at Texas A&M won't be happy if anything diminishes the memory of E. King Gill, who, in 1922, bravely came down out of the stands and stood on the sidelines just in case the injury-ravaged Aggies needed him. Poor Winky Wright thought the 12th man was the last of the dozen Paul Williamses who seemed to all be hitting him at the same time in April.

The Fall Classic: Do you think Major League Baseball is going to allow *anything* to steal away the nickname of its beloved World Series? Heck no. And that's unfortunate

PHOTO BY RAY KASPROWICZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Did Wright see 12 "Punishers"?

because "The Fall Classic" is a perfect way to describe an autumn showdown between Pacquiao and Floyd Mayweather. Maybe they'll let us use "The Classic Fall" to describe Rocky Marciano's knockout of Jersey Joe Walcott or Mike Tyson's tumble out of the open window of life's luxury box.

The Frozen Tundra: No, it's not Nicolay Valuev's frigid chest hair when an icebag is held to his sore pectoral muscle. It's the famed turf of Green Bay's Lambeau Field.

The Most Exciting Two Minutes In Sports: The folks who host the Kentucky Derby love this nickname. So they're no longer going to allow boxing writers to use it when referring to Holly Holm skipping rope sans sports bra.

The Run For The Roses: The Derby jealously guards this one as well. And that's too bad, because what else would you call the Valentine's Day mad dash of fighters who are seeking gifts for their wives, girlfriends, baby mommas, *and* favorite hookers all at the same time?

Amen Corner: The original "Amen Corner," of course, is the 11th, 12th, and 13th holes at the Augusta National Golf Club, home of The Masters. Ask close observers of the Sweet Science what "Amen Corner" is, however, and they'll tell you Peter Manfredo Jr.'s handlers saying two Hail Marys and three Our Fathers every time their man answers the bell.

The Gashouse Gang: At the risk of angering baseball historians who have great admiration for the St. Louis Cardinals of 1934, we'll have to come up with a better description of the cheap-seaters who load up on the dirty-water hot dogs with sauerkraut outside Madison Square Garden on fight night.

Murderers' Row: The 1927 New York Yankees of Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Tony Lazzeri, and Earle Combs retired this nickname when they won 110 regular season games and swept the World Series. So a press section full of boxing bloggers who slaughter the English language with the chilling efficiency of Ted Bundy will have to be renamed.

The Great American Race: Auto racing's version is the Daytona 500. Boxing's version is Mayweather, Hopkins, Don King, and Max Kellerman all trying to beat each other to the nearest microphone.

The Boys Of Summer: You can take the Dodgers out of Brooklyn, but you can never take Brooklyn out of the Dodgers. "The Boys Of Summer" won the 1955 World Series and their prize was eternal rights to the moniker. So we'll need a different one for the Brothers Goossen, promoter Dan and trainer Joe. Have you seen those guys? They spend so much time in the sun they make Shane Mosley look pasty.

The Granddaddy Of Them All: Yeah, yeah, the Rose Bowl has this one locked up. (Close your eyes and you can hear the words rolling off Keith Jackson's tongue.) One problem: What else are we supposed to call Evander Holyfield when his 11 children all start having kids of their own?

The Thrilla In Manila: We've learned that boxing can't steal nicknames from basketball, football, baseball, horse racing, NASCAR, or golf, but is it allowed to steal a nickname from *itself*? If not, we're going to have to come up with a better description of feather-fisted Paulie Malignaggi, Cory Spinks, and Sergio Mora trying to punch their way out of an envelope. ■

By Ivan Goldman

Chris Arreola—Hungry Heavyweight Buzzard

At last, light at the end of the heavyweight tunnel. The way things were going, it was time to contemplate separating the division from boxing altogether. Not exactly banish all the big guys, just quarantine their pitiful contests so they'll stop dragging down the rest of the sport. You ask Michael Buffer or Jimmy Lennon Jr. to announce something along the lines of, "And now, in addition to our regular matches, we have a special attraction between two men too big to qualify as actual fighters. We'll let them compete anyway, but this might be an excellent time to head for the snack counter, check messages on your cell phone, or, if you're watching at home, finally do something about that squeaky door you've been meaning to fix."

But then Chris Arreola mercilessly conquered Jameel McCline, fighting every minute of every round, and at last, in these difficult heavyweight times, there was reason for passion and optimism. Who can argue with the ebullient Larry Merchant, who, like me, isn't generally considered a cockeyed optimist? Arreola has emerged as the hungry cartoon buzzard who exclaims, "Patience hell, I'm going to kill something."

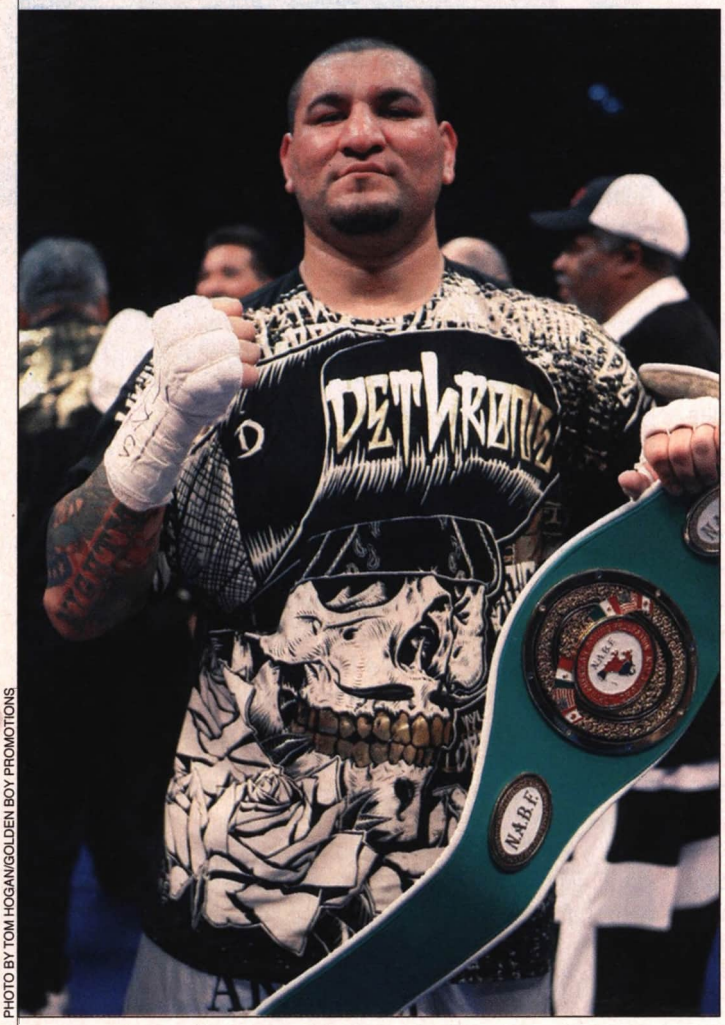


PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Arreola is providing a reason for hope at heavyweight

Yes, in the past I've pointed out that Arreola's jiggling torso indicates less-than-perfect dedication, but a more important test is whether he fights and wins in exciting fashion. And that's one he passes repeatedly. Against McCline, who's always dangerous the first few rounds, "The Nightmare" mixed up his punches, went to the body and head, survived big shots, and, as usual, refused to stop pouring it on. By now everybody knows that the way to beat McCline is to wait a few rounds for weariness and self-doubt to take over because, let's face it, he'd lost three of his last four outings and he's no Klitschko brother. But a man who goes after McCline from the opening bell and takes him out in the fourth round deserves to move up into serious heavyweight contention. Who would you rather see there? John Ruiz?

Meanwhile, the David Haye and Wladimir Klitschko teams have finished their negotiating rhumba and we have what looks like another excellent heavyweight fight to look forward to between a formidable Ukrainian who fights hard when he has to and a Brit who will probably make sure he has to—for as long as it lasts.

Elsewhere in the division, many of us thought we saw a pretty mediocre contest the night big Vitali Klitschko wore down boring Juan Carlos Gomez, ultimately stopping him in the ninth round. But then the next week we saw "Fast" Eddie Chambers jab his way to a 10-round decision over garage-butt Samuel Peter. In retrospect, Vitali-Gomez didn't look so boring after all, did it? The fact that Chambers threw virtually no

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Goldman used to giggle over Arreola's walking jiggle—but no more

bodyshots was a clue to his mind set. A careful fighter is aware when he throws to the body that his opponent might come over the top and hit him in the head. But anyone who uses that kind of reasoning should be down in the audience peddling peanuts instead of up in the ring boring everyone to tears. Notice that when Arreola couldn't find a clear channel to McCline's head, he worked on his gut.

Did you ever, while watching a fight, forget whether it's scheduled for 10 or 12 rounds? It happened to me when we were about halfway through Chambers-Peter. When I checked and saw it was for the shorter distance, I felt like I'd just won a poker hand. It just so happens that the same weekend cautious Chambers and his lard-encrusted opponent puttered around the ring in Los Angeles, basketball's March Madness was raging. So if we wanted to know where the good, exciting heavyweights had disappeared to, all we had to do was turn to CBS and check out Oklahoma's Blake Griffin, a physical, 6'10", 250-pound power forward who can move around the court on his toes.

Athletes like Griffin can sign for NBA millions before they even try on the team jersey. And the sweetest part? They never have to take a punch. There's only one way I know to entice prospects like Griffin into the far more demanding fight game. Pass a law to make the playing of professional basketball or football a felony.

As for Chambers, yes, I knew his excuse for the timid tap dance he performed all around his 265-pound Nigerian Goliath. Chambers was a much smaller man, having weighed in at a less-than-svelte 223 pounds. I have two words to answer the small-guy-must-be-extra-careful argument—Joe Frazier.

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Arreola showed some smarts going downstairs on McCline

"Smokin' Joe" weighed a mere 205½ the night he knocked down and defeated 215-pound Muhammad Ali in the Garden on that spectacular night of March 8, 1971. Ask yourself what Frazier's fight plan might have been against Peter. You know it. We all do. He'd have knocked him out or died trying. And guess what. He wouldn't have had to die trying; he'd have knocked him out.

Young Joe wasn't just a tough guy with a big hook. He also had a terrific defense, driving forward and moving his head and feet like a middleweight while he battered his opponent with quick shots straight out of Philly. Yet there were guys back then who, on a good night, could beat him. Peter couldn't join their company on the best night of his life. Ditto for southpaw Gomez. Incidentally, what's with Gomez' pawing right hand? As long as you're sticking your glove out there, why not throw a real jab? Yes, I know. They call that range finding. But fans didn't put down hard cash to watch an antenna. They paid to see two prizefighters that throw punches at their opponents, not pet them. Gomez resembled the boring Chris Byrd of several years ago, except Byrd was more effective and punched with both hands. As for Chambers, the man can mix it up. He's done it before. If he thinks it's smart to get more tedious as he gets closer to the big money, he needs to think again. Fans and networks are much readier to forgive a fighter's losses when he always comes to fight.

Teaming Arreola, Williams: If HBO gives us another doubleheader featuring Arreola and Paul Williams against two credible opponents, who among us who saw the first show would dare to miss the next one? Two thrilling fights on the same card. What a concept.

Managers handling fighters all the way from welter to middleweight now assume Antonio Margarito wore loaded gloves the night he was outworked and outfought by Williams. And they're thinking, *If Margarito couldn't beat him using plaster wraps, what chance does my guy have against him in a legitimate match?*

Farewell To Golden Boy: Boxing can survive Oscar De La Hoya' retirement, but fighters will still be dazed and confused with no "Golden Boy" to challenge. Not long before Oscar's farewell speech, young Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. touchingly called him out just as his dad did so many years earlier. Calling out Oscar is a fight tradition that's endured since the latter part of the Daddy Bush Administration, when Americans could still find jobs.

Mexican fight impresario Fernando Beltran, who co-promotes Junior with Bob Arum, claimed the Mexican people still don't like Oscar because he defeated their hero, Chavez Senior. Therefore, Beltran said, he *needed* to face Junior. This twisted logic typified just how desperately everyone was to catch a handful of Golden Boy stardust.

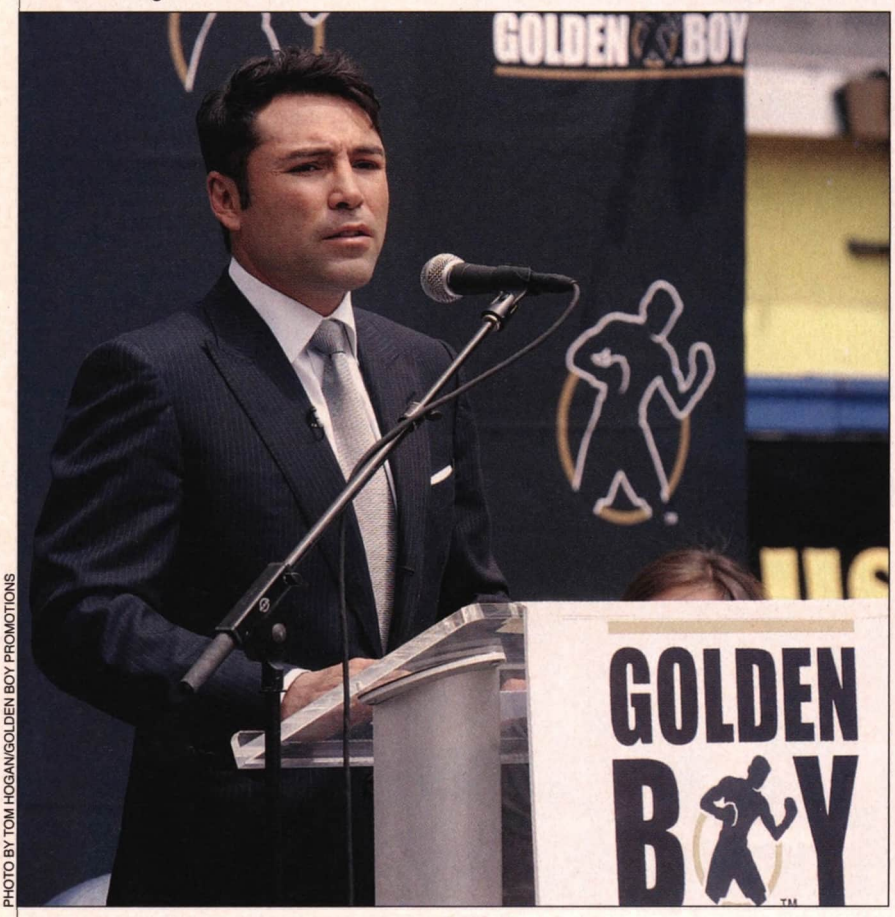


PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

The Golden Boy will be missed

Oscar won only three of his last seven fights—two if you take away his gift decision over Felix Sturm. But we remember fighters for their accomplishments, not for the way they faltered toward the ends of their careers. Nobody remembers much about Sugar Ray Leonard losing to Macho Camacho. What we recall is his big victory over Tommy Hearns. People who've been watching Oscar the last few years could be fooled into thinking he's just better than average. But at 135 pounds he was a handsome killer, a nice kid with a Stinger missile in his left glove. He will be missed.

Quote Of The Month: "They want to get rid of all the guys with bad records. Why? They don't kick the Detroit Lions out of football." (Heavyweight journeyman Marcus Rhode to THE RING's Bill Dettloff)

How To Fix The World Economy: Kick out Timothy Geithner, Lawrence Summers, and all those other Wall Streeters who are supposedly negotiating with their banker and insurance company

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Want to save the economy? Send in Schaefer

pals on behalf of the government. Replace them with promoters like Dan Goossen, Bob Arum, and Richard Schaefer. You might or might not like them, but if you want someone to represent you across the table from hyenas, get yourself someone who's done business with Don King and still made a profit.

Bradley-Holt: Timothy Bradley vs. Kendall Holt was billed as a classic East Coast-West Coast tussle, but their stories and personalities were so compelling it was difficult to root for either because it meant the other one would have to lose. May they both prosper.

Futch Award: To Teddy Atlas. I've complained about him in the past, but as I watched a forgettable four-rounder on ESPN2, it struck me that Teddy gives the same attention to every fight and every fighter. That's hard to do and a gift to the lesser-knowns. He deserves credit. Here it is. ■

Ivan Goldman's boxing-based novel ***The Barfighter*** *has been nominated as a 2009 Notable Book by the American Library Association.*

PHOTO BY HERBY WHYNE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

It's a shame someone had to lose the Bradley-Holt fight

[Camera Clicks]

PHOTO BY VALENTE ROSAS/EL UNIVERSAL VIA GETTY IMAGES

Two Mexican boxing legends, Chiquita Gonzalez and Pipino Cuevas, pay their final respects to a legend who preceded them, former bantamweight titleholder Raul "Raton" Macias, who died of cancer in March at age 74. Macias was Mexico's most popular sports hero of the 1950s, as evidenced by the fact that he drew 50,000 fans to a Mexico City bullring in only his 16th pro fight. The attendance number at his funeral was lower, but not by much.

PHOTO BY TED LERNER

Legendary Filipino flyweight champion Pancho Villa is gone but not forgotten—especially not by his granddaughters, Josie Guilledo and Jona Guilledo Rodrigo. The young ladies are pictured here at their grandfather's induction in the Elorde Hall of Fame in Manila, Philippines. Villa was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1994.

PHOTO BY ANDREW YATES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The middle of a prizefight is no time to be kicking your feet up and relaxing! British junior lightweight Nicky Cook picked a peculiar time to get comfortable, although the shots to the chin landed by opponent Roman Martinez might have had something to do with it. Martinez was nice enough afterward to fetch Cook a pillow and a blanket, and even took off his glove and put a TV remote in his hand.

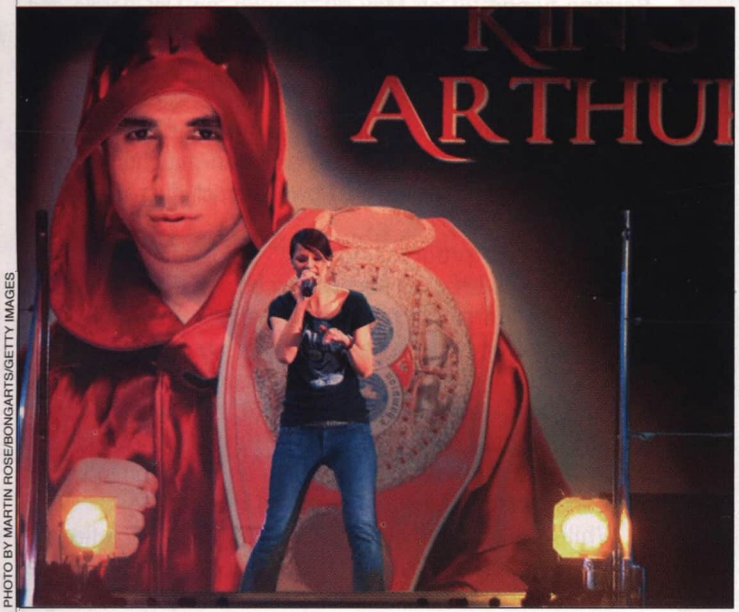


PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Either that photo of Arthur Abraham isn't life-size, or the woman singing is Tinkerbell. Actually, the woman singing is Austrian Christina Stuermer, who entertained the crowd prior to Abraham's March fight in Kiel, Germany, against Lajuan Simon. Stuermer has written several songs about Abraham and performed her chart-topper, "How Do You Mend A Broken Jaw?"

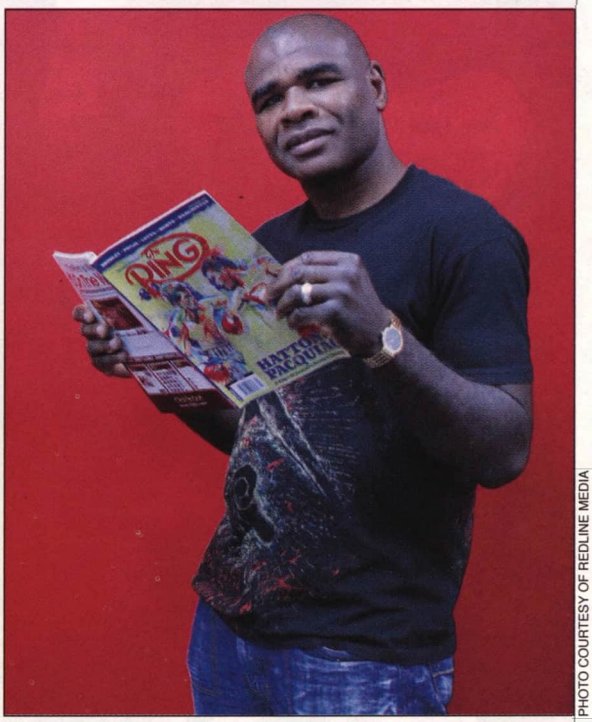


PHOTO COURTESY OF REDLINE MEDIA

"The Road Warrior" becomes "The Read Warrior": A former RING champion, Glen Johnson champions THE RING as his boxing periodical of choice, and is seen here taking in our May 2009 issue. Bringing the same approach to casual reading as he brings to fighting, Johnson is relentless, picking up an issue and reading it from cover to cover without taking a break.

By Don Stewart
PHOTOS BY ED MULHOLLAND

Raymond Serrano Welterweight

At eight years old, Ray Serrano was still into peewee football and afternoon cartoons when his father, Ramon, began teaching him to fight. His start as a boxer wasn't exactly idyllic.

"At first, I didn't like it," Ray recalled. "I was playing football and stuff at the time. I was chubby. I got hit and wanted to quit. But I had to stay in it."

There was no quitting on Papa Ramon, a former fighter who knew talent when he saw it. Boxing runs strong in the Serrano family. In addition to Ramon, there was uncle Ben Serrano, a noted clubfighter in the 1980s who took on Doug DeWitt and Frank "The Animal" Fletcher. Ben later helped raise his nephew by marriage, future welterweight beltholder Kermit Cintron.

Ramon continued to push his son to be the best of the bunch, and by the time Ray was winning Junior Olympic medals, the boy had found some love for the family trade.

Pro Record

2007		
Oct. 19	Tierre King, Philadelphia, PA	KO 1
Nov. 15	Jorge Delgado, Reading, PA	W 4
2008		
Feb. 15	Ashantie Hendrickson, Uncasville, CT	KO 1
March 6	Abraham Bruno, New York City	KO 1
April 25	Damon Antoine, Bronx, NY	W 4
May 9	Charles Wade, Atlantic City, NJ	KO 1
Aug. 29	Jimmy LeBlanc, Philadelphia	KO 1
Nov. 7	Shakha Moore, Atlantic City	W 6
2009		
March 6	Jay Krupp, Uncasville	W 6

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
9	9	0	0	5

Eleven years after that inauspicious start, the Philadelphia welterweight has developed into a legitimate prospect. Serrano ran his record to 9-0 (5) in March with his most noteworthy win to date, a one-sided six-round decision against Jay Krupp on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights.*

At 5'8" tall, Serrano can appear a bit undersized for a welterweight, but he has the still-developing skills to make up for it. He feels his best weapon is his bullet-quick jab, while trainer Danny Davis likes Serrano's body attack.

New York-based promoter Joe DeGuardia might have stumbled upon a future champ in the young Puerto Rican. Serrano turned 20 on May 30, though, so DeGuardia and matchmaker Ron Katz aren't rushing anything at this stage.

Krupp was only the second opponent with a winning record that faced Serrano, with the other being Ashantie Hendrickson, who was 1-0 when Serrano blasted him in one round last February. Serrano has been matched against more experienced opposition, however, including four with at least 20 pro fights.

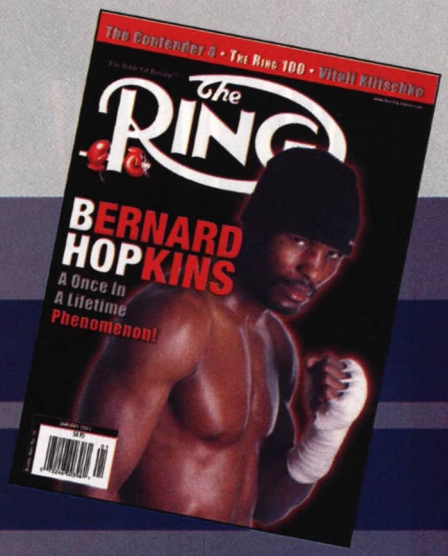
"I think he's progressing well," said DeGuardia, who signed Serrano after his second pro bout. "He's young. He's got a lot to learn, but he certainly shows the speed, the punching power, and the desire that he should have."

The Krupp fight backed up DeGuardia's cautious optimism. Krupp, who entered at 12-1 (5), is a Catskills-based protégé of former Mike Tyson trainer Kevin Rooney. Serrano dropped Krupp in the opening round and went on to win all six rounds on two of the judges' cards.

While he showed flashy hand speed and reflexes, Serrano appeared a bit raw at times. It didn't help that the early knockdown whetted his appetite for a quick stoppage. Serrano got a bit careless, and that led to Krupp buzzing him in the third with a counter shot. Serrano regrouped and easily outboxed Krupp the rest of the way.

(Continued on Page 107)

The RING



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AND NOW THE WORLD KNOWS . . .

PACQUIAO IS KING!

By Nigel Collins

As Ricky Hatton fell to the canvas, everybody else inside the MGM Grand Garden Arena sprang to their feet as one, a mighty roar of exclamation issuing forth from their lungs. It was the pugilistic version of Newton's Third Law (for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction) and signified the breathtaking culmination of Manny Pacquiao's unlikely but inexorable rise to boxing's apex.

It was, simply put, the moment that woke up the rest of the world to what most of us already knew: Pacquiao is a truly great fighter.

It takes a lot of diverse elements coming together at precisely the right time to create a moment such as Pacquiao's awe-inspiring knockout of Hatton. But on the evening of May 2, 2009, all the tumblers on the cosmic wheel clicked into place and provided the perfect set and setting for a seismic shift in boxing's landscape.

To start with, the recent retirement of Oscar De La Hoya, following the worst ass-whipping of his career (fittingly administered by Pacquiao) left boxing bereft of its number-one attraction. Pacquiao was obviously the best candidate to take his place, but the question remained as to whether he could garner enough of the public's attention to adequately fill the void.

De La Hoya's box-office magic is not directly transferable to his conquerors, but beating him, especially in the brutal manner in which Pacquiao accomplished his mission, does provide the winner another opportunity with which to attract a wider audience. It is what he does with that opportunity that counts, and in Pacquiao's case he delivered a transformative performance at a time when the world was ready for it.

You could sense that something was brewing during the build-up to the fight. Mainstream media outlets that had never mentioned Pacquiao before were suddenly interested. Moreover, the two-continent promotional tour quickly became a Pacquiao party, even in Hatton's hometown of Manchester, England, where Filipino residents more than matched the "Hitman's" faithful army in number and enthusiasm.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Wherever Pacquiao went on the promotional tour for the Hatton fight, fans turned out in large numbers to greet him. They were even waiting outside the church in London where the fighter attended Sunday mass (opposite page). Manny was also mobbed in Hatton's hometown of Manchester (above) and greeted by a wildly enthusiastic crowd when he threw out the first pitch at a San Francisco Giants game (below).

PHOTOS BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

"It was unbelievable," said Top Rank photographer Chris Farina, who accompanied Pacquiao on the publicity junket. "Everywhere we went he was mobbed by people. Even at non-publicized events, like when he went to Sunday mass in England, people materialized out of nowhere."

It was just the same on the western side of the Atlantic. According to the San Francisco Giants official website, Pacquiao's appearance at AT&T Park on "Filipino Heritage Night," complete with free Pacquiao bobblehead dolls, sold 11,000 extra tickets for a Tuesday night game against the San Diego Padres.

"Fans went berserk at AT&T Park on Tuesday night," wrote Chris Hoft of MLB.com. "[Pacquiao] caused an uproar as he emerged from the Giants' dugout to throw the first pitch. He received a noisy standing ovation from fans, many of whom were not Filipino."

The last phrase in that sentence is crucial to understanding what is going on in boxing today, and how the global nature of the sport has become increasingly important to its fiscal health. The fact that Pacquiao holds demigod status in the Philippines is no longer irrelevant outside of his homeland.

Neither, for that matter, is Hatton's ability to bring tens of thousands of fans with him when he travels from the U.K. to fight in United States. True, the deposed champion's impact on the market could

TOTAL DEVASTATION

Ricky Hatton did okay for the first 30 seconds or so of his fight with Manny Pacquiao. He charged out of his corner and straight at the man who was attempting to take away his RING junior welterweight championship. It was a championship that Hatton had held since June 2005 and successfully defended five times. He was unbeatable at the weight and convinced he'd stay that way, regardless of the betting odds in his challenger's favor.

Hatton, 140, barged forward, and bustled Pacquiao into the ropes, where he did his best to inflict damage by digging to the body and mauling. But Pacquiao was both unflustered and unscathed, and the instant he began to connect, the helplessness of Hatton's cause became painfully apparent. Pacquiao, who weighed in at 138 pounds (reportedly after eating two breakfasts), easily avoided Hatton's offensive attempts and appeared to hurt his man with every punch that landed.

It was the right hook that sent Hatton tumbling to the canvas the first time, and although he beat referee Kenny Bayless' count, the defending champ was down again courtesy of a prolonged flurry late in the round. Once more he bravely rose and survived until the bell, but the only respite from his antagonist's flying fists in the second round came when Hatton managed to grab and hold for a few seconds.

Otherwise, Hatton was on the receiving end of an increasingly severe beating. Still, few, least of all Hatton, were prepared for the alarmingly abrupt climax that came in the form of an arching lightning bolt of a left hand. The perfectly delivered punch crashed into the side of Hatton's jaw with such a paralyzing impact that the recipient was unconscious before he hit the floor.

Bayless didn't even bother to count, waving the fight over at the 2:59 mark of the round as Pacquiao's fans rejoiced and the large Hatton contingent looked on in stunned disbelief.

"This was no surprise to me," said Roach of the first knockdown. "We always knew Hatton pumped his hands before throwing a punch and was a sucker for the right hook. We worked on it the entire camp."

"I was just doing my job in the ring and doing my best to make the people happy," said the unassuming Pacquiao after raising his record to 49-3-2 (37) and winning his third RING world championship belt in three different weight classes. "He was big and strong, but I was lucky tonight."

Before he left the press conference, Pacquiao invited everybody to join him in celebrating his victory.

"I am singing at Mandalay tonight," he said, his face lighting up like a six-year-old on his way to a birthday party. "I brought my band from the Philippines. Come on over."

So while the winner serenaded his fans and Hatton, 45-2 (32), was taken to the hospital as a precautionary measure, the boxing world breathed a collective sigh of relief. It had a product in Pacquiao that people want to buy, and the future without Oscar De La Hoya was looking much brighter.

—N.C.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Pacquiao follows through with the massive right hand that began Hatton's downfall in the opening round of their bout. There has been so much improvement in "Pac-Man's" right that it is now almost as lethal as his left.

very well be fading following his second knockout defeat, but his success to date has been an early indicator of how the sport is adjusting to changing times.

There have always been popular foreign fighters plying their trade in the U.S., but today's multicultural society is gradually opening up heretofore untapped revenue streams. The sport was ripe for a special fighter to bridge the ethnic and nationalistic gap, and the fact that Pacquiao was ready and waiting was a stroke of extraordinary good luck, one of those serendipitous things that helps balance all the crap boxing and those who love it have to endure in the normal course of events.

But make no mistake. Pacquiao is more than the right fighter at the right time; he's a unique fighter at a unique time, one who holds up to the world

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Hatton simply couldn't handle Pacquiao's speed and power

the very best the game has to offer in all its savage splendor and primitive innocence.

A stone assassin in the ring, Pacquiao remains humble and generous to a fault despite his unprecedented success, and has managed to carry the hopes and dreams of the Philippine people on his shoulders for the best part of a decade without caving under the pressure.

His boyish features (even at 30) and his ready smile counterbalance the fierce ring demeanor, complete with Roberto Duran-like flying hair and scraggly beard. The big difference is that Pacquiao is a friendly Duran, minus the malevolent attitude and over-the-top machismo. Shortly after nearly decapitating Hatton, he invited his victim to visit him in the Philippines.

Perhaps the most important part of the equation, however, is Pacquiao's coming of age as a fighter at the exact time the rare opportunity to become the face of boxing presented itself. This was no coincidence, but rather the result of old-fashioned hard work and dedication.

Freddie Roach says he's the best trainer in the world because he trains the best fighter in the world. He's right, of course, and we love him for saying it, but you have to figure that the partnership between he and Pacquiao has played a major role in preparing Manny for the position in which he currently finds himself.

Roach says everything they've been working on over the past eight years has all come together the last two fights, and it's impossible to argue with the evidence. He has helped transform Pacquiao into a complete fighter without taking away one iota of his natural aggressive tendencies.

Gone is the poor balance and amateurish lunging, replaced by well-planned and flawlessly executed footwork. Gone is the almost total reliance on his terrifying left hand, a lethal blow now augmented by an equally devastating right hook. His ability to fight successfully at four different weights in four successive fights against world-class opponents is virtually unheard of in post-World War II boxing.

All of the factors under discussion here are crucial to the total package, but it was the way Pacquiao finished Hatton that grabbed the world by the throat and demanded it paid attention. Even though Hatton had already been knocked down

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Pacquiao glances over his shoulder at Hatton as he jogs to a neutral corner after the final knockdown of the fight. "He just laid there," said referee Kenny Bayless, who stopped the fight without bothering to count. "He didn't even try to get up."

twice in the first round and everybody knew he was doomed to go down again, the sudden and brutal finality of his second-round defeat touched a primeval cord in all who saw it.

Photographs of Hatton stretched out on the blue canvas flooded newspapers and the Internet, spreading the image of his chilling defeat throughout the world. He lay stiff as a plank, arms at his sides, legs straight, totally unaware of the 16,262 pairs of eyeballs riveted on his supine body.

The finishing punch and Hatton's reaction instantly became one of boxing's seminal moments, and will be remembered as much for its spectacular violence as for its importance to Pacquiao's career, a piece of fistic history destined to live on in perpetuity in highlight-reel heaven.

The real scary part is that Pacquiao continues to improve and believes he can be even better.

Many observers believe that even egomaniacal Floyd "Money" Mayweather is intimidated by Pacquiao's prowess. You can't say it was Pacquiao's kayo of Hatton that made Mayweather decide to fight Juan Manuel Marquez, because the fight was announced a few hours prior to Pacquaio-Hatton. It's fair to surmise, however, that Little Floyd wouldn't have signed to fight the world lightweight champion in the first place if he was eager to take back the mythical pound-for-pound crown from the man who succeeded him.

Roach expressed the majority opinion when he said, "I don't think Mayweather really wants to fight Manny. He's scared of my man, and I doubt if he would like to fight him after this."

Regardless of how Mayweather really feels, Top Rank publicist Lee Samuels told THE RING that Pacquiao's promotional company was prepared to make Mayweather a large offer the day after the Hatton fight to fight Pacquiao, and was taken by surprise when rival Golden Boy Promotions beat them to the punch with the Mayweather-Marquez match.

Top Rank Chairman of the Board Bob Arum claimed that Pacquiao doesn't need Mayweather and could fight Miguel Cotto instead, providing the Puerto Rican welterweight gets past Joshua Clottey on June 13 at Madison Square Garden. Such a match could conceivably do well at the box office and rack up profitable pay-per-view numbers. But that wouldn't change the fact that anything less than Pacquiao-Mayweather is delaying, and possibly depriving, the fans of what they most want to see and the sport of the biggest fight that can be made.

But if promotional rivalry has skewed the natural progression of things, boxing has gained a superstar whose popularity is rapidly catching up with his fantastic ability. More and more people are now aware of this charismatic figure whose universal appeal is equaled by his knack for seizing the moment.

Pacquiao's moment is now, and all it took was the perfect punch at the perfect time against the perfect opponent to knock down the remaining barriers between him and his destiny as the Sweet Science's first truly international superstar since Muhammad Ali. ■

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

The winner and new RING magazine 140-pound champion of the world is carried around the ring following his scintillating knockout of Hatton. Manny, who also holds the mythical pound-for-pound title, is undoubtedly boxing's biggest attraction and the man expected to keep the turnstiles spinning.

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Finally, A Heavyweight Fight To Get Excited About!

By Brian Doogan

The timing was portentous, perhaps. Vitali Klitschko had just dismantled former cruiserweight titleholder Juan Carlos Gomez in a manner reminiscent of Georgia's recent defeat by the Red Army—early success for the little guys drew only painful retribution when the big guns were unleashed.

In an anteroom at the rear of Hanns-Martin-Schleyer Halle in Stuttgart, the 37-year-old heavyweight titleholder spoke amiably to the assembled media, predominantly European, after Gomez had dragged his sore carcass to a necessary sanctuary. Meanwhile, Klitschko's manager, Bernd Boente, talked up the next ex-cruiserweight king versus heavyweight behemoth encounter, David and Goliath's incalculable sequel.

HAYE vs. WLADIMIR

PHOTO BY TORSTEN SILZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

In his most recent fight, Wladimir stopped former heavyweight champion Hasim Rahman in the seventh round. It was not, however, a very good indication of the IBF titleholder's current form, as Rahman, years past his prime, provided zero competition.

His fighter will defend the IBF heavyweight title against THE RING's number-nine contender, David Haye, on June 20 at the 60,000-seat Schalke Stadium in Gelsenkirchen, Germany. "Vitali wants to fight the winner of Nicolay Valuev-Ruslan Chagaev later this year and this leaves Wladimir and Haye who, as Emanuel Steward [Klitschko's trainer] says, is a colorful guy and an exciting fighter. It should be a very exciting heavyweight fight."

Those sorts of bouts have been fewer and farther between in recent years, with the elder Klitschko's courageous challenge of Lennox Lewis in June 2003 representing for many fight followers a kind of requiem for the heavyweight division. Curiosity in what was once "the richest prize in sport" has declined to such an extent that the standard-bearers wage war in Germany and Switzerland nowadays, while smaller men occupy the traditional boxing citadels of Madison Square Garden and the Las Vegas Strip.

Not a single heavyweight title fight has been staged in America since February 2008—in various guises, seven have taken place elsewhere—and no one who witnessed Wladimir Klitschko's partial unification contest against Sultan Ibragimov at the Garden will be wallowing in grief over this anomaly. The heavyweight crown once worn by Sullivan, Johnson, Dempsey, Louis, Ali, Frazier, Foreman, Holmes, Tyson, Holyfield, and Lewis has fragmented into a quasi-Ponzi scheme as flawed as Bernie Madoff's.

So why does Klitschko-Haye promise to be something of a throwback? Will the British challenger not be as hopelessly outgunned as Gomez proved to be against the other Klitschko? What scenarios would be good for heavyweight boxing and, by extension, the sport itself? Is Haye too chinny or is Wladimir sufficiently vulnerable? Who will win, how, and why?

If the heavyweight title is to become whole again, one of the Klitschkos will have to be beaten, for they will not box one another, understandably. Boxing is not like tennis in which the Williams sisters, Serena and Venus, can habitually meet in Grand Slam finals, lick their wounds, and then join together to go door to door as Witnesses for Jehovah. Only a sadist could derive pleasure out of the Klitschkos squaring off, as intriguing in theory as it may be.

Despite the improvements that Steward has effected since 2004, when he began working with Wladimir and watched him get stopped by Lamon Brewster in their first engagement, the younger brother still appears to be more susceptible. In part, this is because Vitali has looked so imperious since he returned from a four-year injury layoff to dominate Samuel Peter, but Wladimir's latent reluctance for the battle is significant also.

"I was afraid of boxing," Klitschko revealed about his one-time mindset at his training camp in West Palm Beach, Florida, before he fought Ibragimov. "I was scared to death going into the ring. The bright lights, the people—I didn't feel comfortable. It wasn't until I was 25 years old that I boxed with a plan or a strategy, when Emanuel Steward explained more and more to me about boxing."

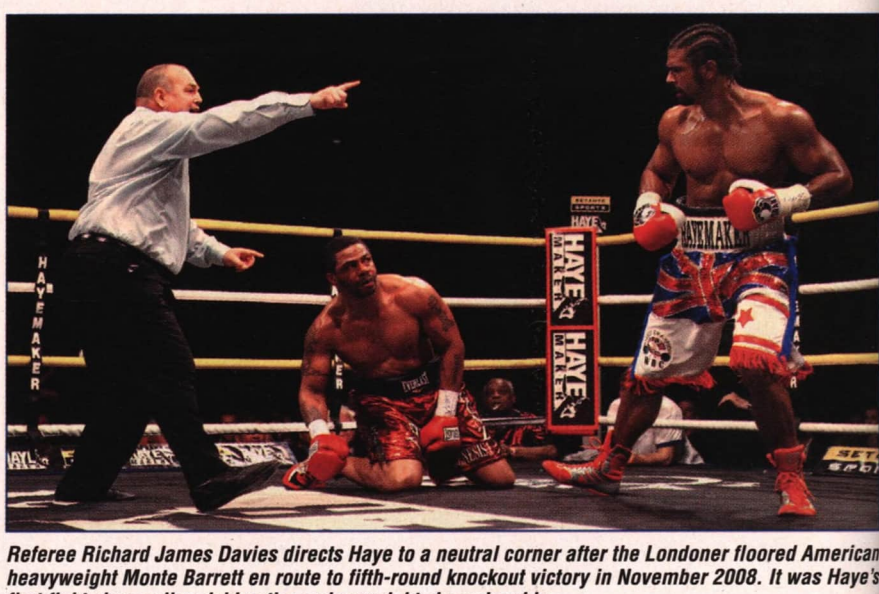


PHOTO BY PAUL GILHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Referee Richard James Davies directs Haye to a neutral corner after the Londoner floored American heavyweight Monte Barrett en route to fifth-round knockout victory in November 2008. It was Haye's first fight since relinquishing the cruiserweight championship.

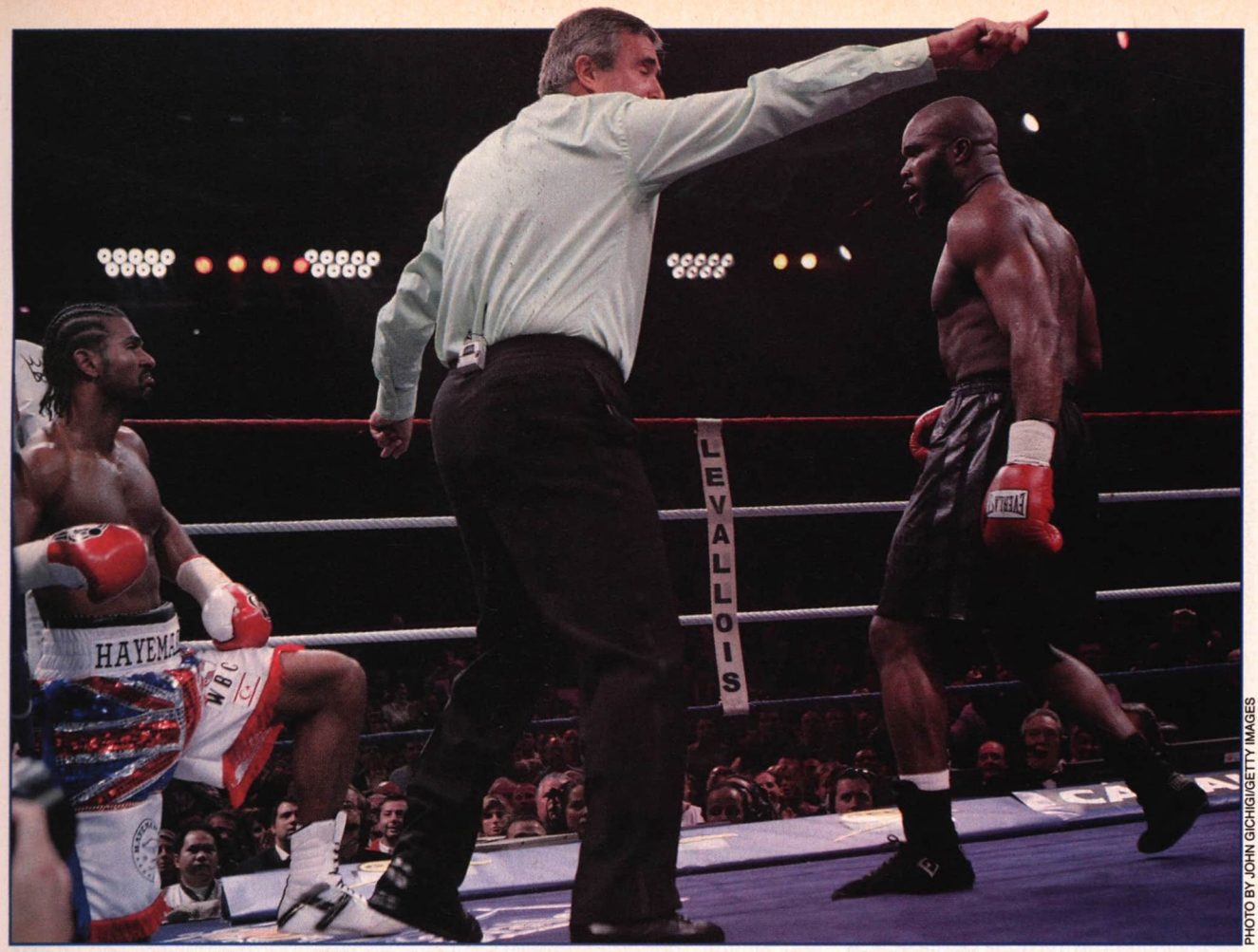


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Battle of the china chins: Both Haye and Klitschko have been knocked down a number of times during their careers. Haye had to come off the floor to win the cruiserweight world championship against Jean-Marc Mormeck in November 2007 (above), and Wladimir was forced to overcome several knockdowns before prevailing via decison in his September 2005 fight with Sam Peter (below).

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO IMAGES

PHOTO BY IAN KINGTON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Apparently, Haye drives just as recklessly as he fights. He's pictured here crashing his car into a barrier during a charity race against Frank Bruno in December 2008. But Haye's let-it-all-hang-out style could very well be what is needed to beat Wladimir, who often looks uncomfortable when pressed.

It is not surprising, therefore, that observers have identified a fragile core to explain some of his more cautious/boring performances.

"Wladimir Klitschko is suspect and he fights the way he does because he's been knocked out three times," insisted Robert McCracken, trainer of Carl Froch, Haye's former teammate on the Great Britain amateur squad. "When you have been knocked out three times you are going to be suspect. You're going to think that if one punch comes over clean, there is a good chance you're going out. You won't fight your natural fight, you'll fight frightened and you'll be completely negative, one punch at a time before grabbing the other guy. When Wladimir boxed Samuel Peter he was holding sometimes before either of them had even thrown a shot. He's become very hesitant, all strategic."

Froch went further. "Wladimir is an easier fight for David than Vitali would be because he's frightened of his own shadow," he said, a harsh declaration given that Klitschko is 52-3 (46) overall and 10-0 (7) with one technical decision since his disintegration against Brewster, which he avenged in six one-sided rounds in July 2007. But however dubiously acquired, reputations are hard to shake, and the perception that Klitschko's psyche and chin are weak is one shared by the 28-year-old challenger from Bermondsey, south London.

Haye does not lack for confidence, but similar reservations can be expressed about his own chin and durability. In his seventh fight, an unheralded African super middleweight named Lolenga Mock had Haye in trouble before he rallied and prevailed in the fourth round. Four fights later, Carl Thompson, a former cruiserweight titleholder, stopped him in the fifth round even though the 40-year-old veteran was at the end of his career. Jean-Marc Mormeck floored him also, and his slugfest with Monte Barrett last November was like something out of the Wild West and, ultimately, a matter of whether Haye would get caught or the other guy. On that occasion, it was the other guy. Haye did get dropped by a left hook in round five before Barrett delivered another left hook while he was on the floor, costing the American a point and giving the Briton more time to recover. Seconds later, he took Barrett out with a left-right-left combination to the chin, but living dangerously in the land of the big men offers no guarantees.

"David lost his discipline against Barrett and that was not the way we had planned for him to fight, though it was hugely exciting and that's what people love to see," Adam Booth, his trainer, reflected. "The strategy will be different against Wladimir. David punches hard enough—no question, he showed this against Barrett and Tomasz Bonin, whom he stopped in the first round in 2007—and he won't be overawed by the occasion, but his speed will be the key."

It is his gunslinger's attitude that elevates Haye above the uninspiring list of heavyweight contenders and this is why he has secured a shot at Klitschko so quickly (he only surrendered his world cruiserweight title in May last year, whereas Gomez waited almost eight years for his chance). It may also be his only way to bring down a man with a 3½-inch height advantage and a three-inch advantage in reach. But could it also be his downfall? If he does not win quickly, can he stay strong into the late rounds against a considerably bigger man and can he take Klitschko's punch? His admission that Barrett's jabs "felt like a cruiserweight's right hand" emphasizes the great risk that he is about to take.

Furthermore, at 33, Klitschko has matured mentally and physically, perhaps, into the kind of heavyweight that a 6'6½", 240-pound former Olympic Games gold medalist ought to be. Lewis maintained that he hit his peak after he reached 30, and Klitschko feels the same way.

"As Lennox pointed out, as a heavyweight you get better when you get over 30, and that's what I feel is happening at this stage of my career," he said.

It is not easy to put this conviction to the test when analyzing his seven fights since Peter floored him three times in September '05 before Klitschko prevailed on points. Chris Byrd and Brewster were shadows of their former selves in respective rematches in '06 and '07, while Calvin Brock, Austin, Ibragimov, and Tony Thompson brought

so little to the competition that they were also-rans in a two-horse race. Klitschko was fluid, fearless, and utterly dominant last time out against Hasim Rahman, but the former champion never threatened to retaliate, so the Ukrainian titleholder was able to attack with impunity until the American was saved by referee Tony Weeks in the seventh round.

"Has-been Rahman is over the hill," Haye related from ringside. "I have already riled the big boys, which they needed. Wladimir's fight against Rahman was boring. Mike Tyson would have eaten him up in three rounds and spat him out. That is exactly what I'm going to do with the lame Klitschkos."

It was in Mannheim after Klitschko-Rahman that Vitali was made aware of a photo in *Men's Health* magazine of a smiling Haye holding aloft the decapitated head of Wladimir almost like a trophy.

"I was shocked with what I saw, and my wife even felt unwell," Vitali admitted to Russian reporters. "It is difficult to describe my feelings at that moment. There was David Haye, laughing as he held the head of my brother. I came to David, of course, and said that it was too blatant and that he overstepped the mark. But, in response, I got the words that he would beat my brother and then me."

The precise sequence of these proposed encounters became obscured in the protracted negotiations that ensued. A fight between Haye and Vitali at an outdoor venue in London was agreed in principle, but the WBC intervened and the focus switched to Haye vs. Wladimir before talks stalled. Finally, the deal was resurrected in mid-March.

PHOTO BY JAMES COLDREY/WIREIMAGES

Wladimir might "feel good" at the Felix Burda Awards 2009 in Berlin, but it remains to be seen how he'll feel after meeting Haye this summer in what figures to be the most highly anticipated heavyweight fight in some time.

"The WBC insisted that Vitali had to box his mandatory against Gomez next and he went back on our agreement, which left me and Adam having to go again to Wladimir, who was our main target in the first place," Haye explained.

For the younger Klitschko, it will be his most meaningful bout since the white-knuckle rollercoaster ride against Peter.

"Talk is cheap and I recognize that David Haye is good at talking, but now we will see if he can back it all up as a heavyweight," Wladimir said. "He is exciting, he is a puncher, and he will generate a lot of interest because of his loud personality. I didn't know about him at all until last year, so all of his shouting has served him well. There is a saying, however: Be careful what you wish for. He wanted to fight the Klitschkos and here is his chance. He has talked the talk, but can he walk the walk? Can he take the punch of a true heavyweight? Can he dig down deep, if necessary, or will he fall apart? I would not have stayed out of the ring for so long if I had known how long it would take to put this fight together, but now I am looking forward to it. Can Haye back up his words with actions?"

If he can, he will go on to fight Vitali for the world heavyweight title. His ambushes will need to be fast and accurate and his defense much tighter than it was against Barrett. While Wladimir may be cautious by nature, he can be clinical when the right opening presents itself. Haye has everything to prove in only his third bout as a full-fledged heavyweight and he will be up against it, which he knows himself.

"I told the Klitschkos, 'Put it on anywhere you want, I don't care,' so if it goes to points, I know that in Germany I will lose," Haye said. "But I'm not going to let that happen."

If change happens, it will be good for heavyweight boxing. For the big boys, just a competitive, action fight would be a seismic change. ■

Brian Doogan is THE RING's European correspondent.

OUR EXCLUSIVE ANNUAL REPORT

THE STATE OF THE GAME

By Eric Raskin

Oscar De La Hoya's retirement announcement in April marked the end of a boxing lineage. No, not a title lineage. A different sort of lineage, one that connected the likes of Mike Tyson, Sugar Ray Leonard, Muhammad Ali—men whose fights were always major events and guaranteed draws regardless of the opponent. That lineage has now been broken, as every superstar remaining in the sport needs a fellow superstar opponent to make a fight that matters to mainstream America.

Does that mean boxing is dying? Of course not. It just means promoters and networks need to work a little harder and get more creative than they used to. It means that the state of our sport has shifted: It's more about fights and less about fighters. And in unrelated shifts, it's more about foreign fighters than American fighters these days, and it's more about smaller fighters than heavyweights. The outlook for the sport isn't necessarily worse than it used to be; the outlook is just different than it used to be.

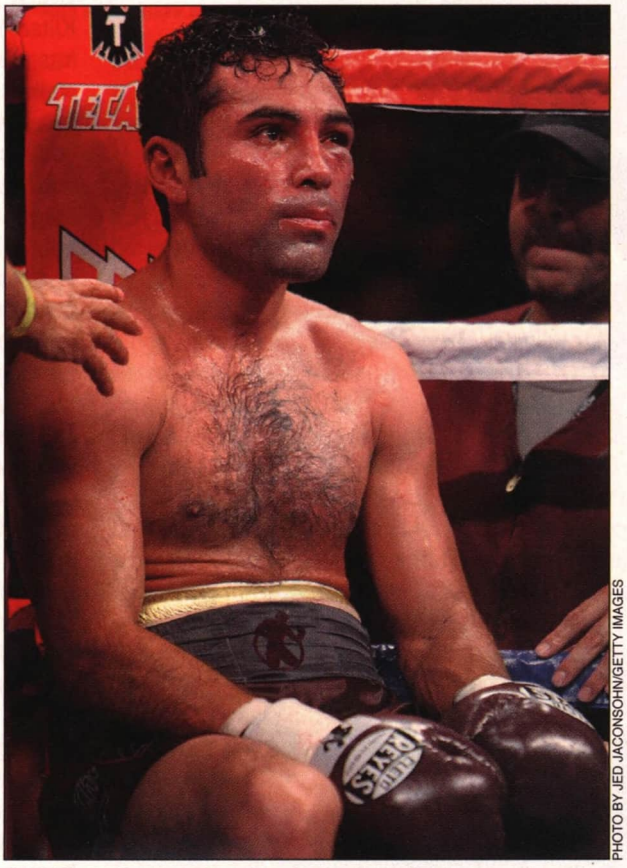


PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

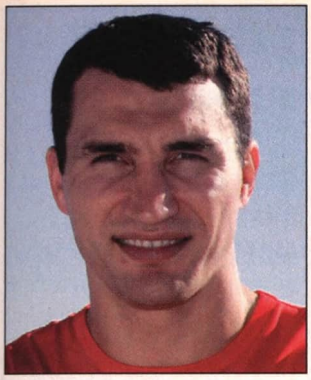
Could De La Hoya's end mark a new beginning?

To a large extent, change is a good thing. And while some of the old guard still hangs on, like the incomparable Bernard Hopkins and the magnificent Shane Mosley, for the most part, the pound-for-pound list has finally been turned over. There's no more De La Hoya, no more Roy Jones, no more Felix Trinidad, no more Winky Wright, no more Marco Antonio Barrera, no more Erik Morales. It took longer than we expected for many of those stars to fade, but finally, the next generation has taken over. That reality is undeniably exciting.

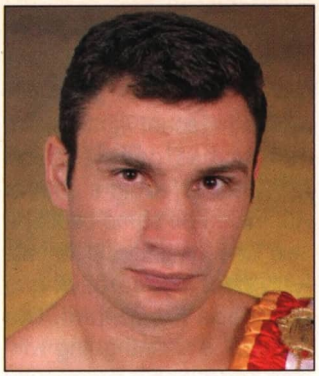
And so is this reality: Due to an economy in crisis, fewer fights are landing in stale casino settings and fewer fights are landing on pay-per-view. Instead, we're getting major fights in front of huge crowds in real cities where people live, and we're getting HBO-worthy and Showtime-worthy fights on HBO and Showtime. Imagine that.

Before we get to our annual analysis of every little thing in every little corner of the sport, a couple of quick notes about the sidebars that you'll see accompanying each division in this "State Of The Game" report. First, "Most Avoided" can refer to either a fighter who has been avoided recently or one who we suspect will be avoided starting now. And second, "Deserves A Title Shot" means different things in different divisions. In divisions with a RING champion, the designation goes to whoever most deserves a RING title shot, regardless of whether they already hold an alphabet title. In divisions without a RING champion, we've named someone worthy of an alphabet title shot.

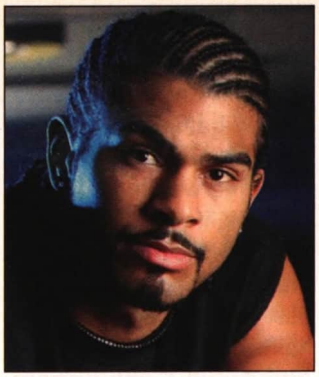
(Note: This section is based on results through April 18, 2009.)



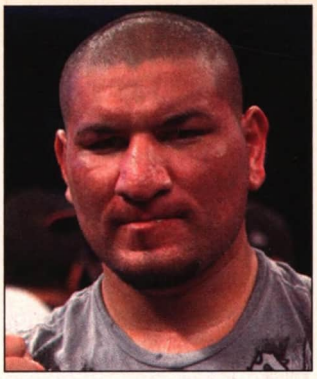
Wladimir Klitschko



Vitali Klitschko



David Haye



Chris Arreola

HEAVYWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Vitali Klitschko

BEST BOXER
Wladimir Klitschko

MOST PROTECTED
David Rodriguez

MOST AVOIDED
Ruslan Chagaev

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Frans Botha

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Wladimir Klitschko-
Vitali Klitschko

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Alexander Povetkin

MOST FUN TO WATCH
David Haye

ON THE WAY UP
Denis Boytsov

ON THE WAY DOWN
Sam Peter

BEST FIGHT IN 2008
Chazz Witherspoon KO 8
Adam Richards

HEAVYWEIGHT

If you're looking at the glass as half full—or even a quarter full, which would be full enough to symbolize atypical optimism in today's heavyweight division—you could say we are currently at one of the most unique points in the history of the big men. A two-headed monster known as **Wladimir** and **Vitali Klitschko**, co-champions of sorts, rules the division. Neither one has earned universal recognition as "The Man," but together, they're the fighters that other heavyweights have to go through in pursuit of such recognition themselves. It's sort of a fun game: Beat one Klitschko, and you're in the top two; beat 'em both, and you're The Man.

Making the game less fun, unfortunately, are the facts that (a) most fights involving either Klitschko make for tedious viewing, and (b) there might not be any current contenders capable of beating either of them. And if nobody beats any Klitschkos, that means we have to wait for one of them to retire before we can consider crowning a real champion, since they will never, ever fight each other, no matter how many times reporters ask them that same question they've been fending off for a decade.

The current hopes for breaking the Klitschko monopoly rest on the shoulders of **David Haye**, who fights Wladimir on June 20. Former RING cruiserweight champ Haye is exciting, charismatic, and fast enough to cause problems, but the challenge of avoiding Klitschko's heavy shots long enough to land something devastating of his own appears stern. If Haye fails, Russian **Alexander Povetkin** will be due a mandatory shot, and he, like Haye, is relatively young, exciting, and a clear underdog against a Klitschko.

There are two additional interesting, young heavyweights inching toward title shots, one we've seen plenty of in America and one who remains largely a secret. **Chris Arreola** is the latest hopeful getting a push from HBO, and so far the Mexican-American has delivered, though not against real top-10 opposition. And 26-year-old **Alexander Dimitrenko** might be just what is required to knock off a Klitschko: a Klitschko Klone. He stands 6'7", about 255 pounds, was born in the Ukraine, and lives and fights in Germany. Sound familiar?

The most proven, and perhaps the best, non-Klitschko in the division in **Ruslan Chagaev**, who has been hampered by a string of injuries but remains unbeaten and ranked third by THE RING. If he wins his upcoming rematch with **Nicolay Valuev**, it would make perfect sense for him to fight a Klitschko as they pursue their goal of collectively holding all four alphabet belts.

Elsewhere in the division, American **Eddie Chambers** is skillful but doesn't exactly scream "future champ," we're rapidly losing interest in the mouthy **Kevin Johnson**, **Odlanier Solis** has replaced **Juan Carlos Gomez** as the mediocre Cuban hope, and veterans **John Ruiz**, **Oleg Maskaev**, and even **Evander Holyfield** just won't go away.

It's tough to look at this glass as half full, but we're trying.

Think About It: The average weight of THE RING's top 10 heavyweights (based on their most recent fights) is a whopping 245 pounds, making this by far the largest era of heavyweights we've ever seen. Notably, only four lineal heavyweight champions weighed as much as 245 on the day they won the title: Jess Willard, Primo Carnera, George Foreman (second reign), and Lennox Lewis (second reign). Willard weighed exactly 245 when he lost the championship to Jack Dempsey; how amazing that what once was considered freakishly gigantic is now merely average. And yes, the current average is a tad skewed by the enormity of the 310¾-pound Valuev, but even if you remove the seven-footer from the equation, the average is 237.7 pounds—still pretty darned huge.

CRUISERWEIGHT

Nobody likes a tease. Maybe that's why the cruiserweight division has never been all that popular.

In the past year alone, fans of the division have suffered two major teases. First, we had an exciting, compelling champion in David Haye, and he bolted for heavyweight after making one defense. And then we were all but assured that a fascinating match between new RING champion **Tomasz Adamek** and **Bernard Hopkins** was going to take place, only to have negotiations go nowhere.

A 44-year-old who can often bore a boxing fan into questioning his love for the sport, Hopkins would not be a sure thing to energize some divisions. But the situation seemed to be just right at cruiser. Adamek makes exciting fights and is gaining in popularity but badly needs a "name" opponent, something that simply doesn't exist in the 200-pound class. For Hopkins, it would have been a chance to make history by gaining a true, legitimate world championship in a third weight class. For Adamek, it would have been a huge step toward the mainstream for a guy whose best-known opponents so far have been **Chad Dawson** and **Steve Cunningham**. And because Adamek is a big draw in Newark, New Jersey, and Hopkins is from Philly, that fight could have packed the house in Atlantic City or at the Prudential Center in Newark.

But unless something changes drastically, it isn't going to happen, and instead Adamek will have to choose from among his many solid but underexposed cruiserweight contenders. Cunningham is the clear top choice, having lost a thriller to Adamek in December '08. **Guillermo Jones** is a solid veteran with an alphabet belt, but the Panamanian is hardly an attraction. **Firat Arslan** and **Marco Huck**, who faced each other shortly after this magazine's press deadline, are both decent fighters, but neither has done enough to raise interest in a shot at Adamek. The same could be said for soon-to-be-opponents **Krzysztof Wlodarczyk** and **Giacobbe Fragomeni**. **Ola Afolabi** is an intriguing wild card coming off a spectacular kayo of favored **Enzo Maccarinelli** in March, but the talented California-based Brit could use one more win over a contender before we take him seriously.

Two others to keep an eye on: **Troy Ross** dominated the fourth season of *The Contender*, so the decorated amateur whose pro career began slowly might be in a position to become a star at age 33. And if **Chris Byrd** can surprise us and prove he's not a shot fighter, his name could make him a player.

Think About It: The heavyweight division has become increasingly European-dominated and devoid

CRUISERWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Tomasz Adamek

BEST BOXER
Steve Cunningham

MOST PROTECTED
B.J. Flores

MOST AVOIDED
Steve Cunningham

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Arthur Williams

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Tomasz Adamek-Bernard Hopkins

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Steve Cunningham

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Tomasz Adamek

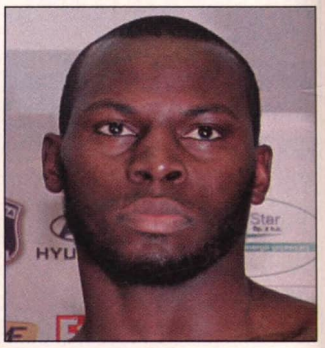
ON THE WAY UP
Troy Ross

ON THE WAY DOWN
Enzo Maccarinelli

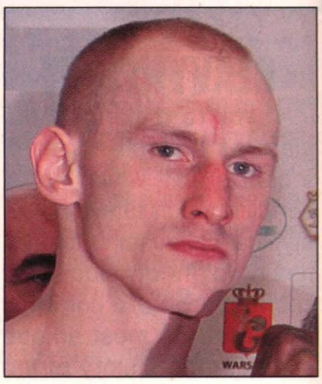
BEST FIGHT IN 2008
Tomasz Adamek W 12
Steve Cunningham

PHOTO BY JOHN BOOZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Tomasz Adamek slams Gary Gomez



Steve Cunningham



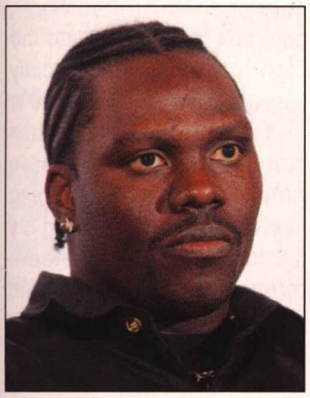
Krzysztof Wlodarczyk

of quality Americans, so should it come as any surprise that the next division down is following a similar path? There are only two current RING-rated cruiserweights who are American-born (Cunningham and **Matt Godfrey**), while there are two from Poland, one from Germany, one from Yugoslavia, one from Russia, and one from Italy. Not only are America's best young big men becoming linebackers and power forwards, but our best young almost-as-big men are apparently becoming strong safeties and shooting guards.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT

A couple of decades ago, George Foreman set out to prove there was life after 40 in boxing. He went on to validate his own theory by winning the heavyweight championship at age 45. And the strongest validation since comes via a look at the upper rungs of today's 175-pound division.

Four of THE RING's top six light heavyweights are in their 40s. Some of them may be spiraling slowly downward, but all remain surprisingly capable for their ages. Leading the way is **Bernard Hopkins**, fresh off a masterful win over Kelly Pavlik at a 170-pound catchweight and still without a clear-cut loss on his record since 1993. He's in the pound-for-pound top three at an age where most men are battling midlife crises and preparing to send their kids off to college. And he could be an even higher P-4-P if the narrow decision he lost to Joe Calzaghe in April '08 had gone the other way.



Guillermo Jones

Joining Hopkins in the seniors' society are three 40-year-olds. **Glen Johnson** remains as dangerous as ever, **Antonio Tarver** is fading but would rightfully be favored over anyone outside the top five, and **Roy Jones** isn't half the fighter he once was but can still beat any fringe contender on hand speed alone. Johnson is nothing short of amazing and Tarver and Jones are at least better than we thought they'd be at this stage.

But someday, the old guard has to move on (we think), and when that day comes, this division should belong to 26-year-old **Chad Dawson**—if it doesn't already. Dawson was scheduled for a pointless rematch with Tarver following our press deadline, but we feel comfortable assuming that will be another "W" for the Connecticut southpaw, and then there will be two possible fights in which he can try to grab the torch. If Hopkins doesn't opt for retirement, then Hopkins-Dawson would be an intriguing cross-generational match to fill the vacant RING title. And if Hopkins does depart, that would make a rematch between Dawson and Johnson, who battled more or less to a standstill last April, a RING title fight.

The rest of the division is ho-hum: **Zsolt Erdei** still refuses to defend his alphabet trinket against anyone in the top 50; **Clinton Woods** would have to do something spectacular to erase the stench of his non-effort against Tarver in April '08; and **Adrian Diaconu** is interesting in that he's only 30 years old, undefeated, and makes for good fights, but he seems too one-dimensional to ever factor into the real title picture.

If there's a wild card here, it's 27-year-old **Tavoris Cloud**, who roared into our consciousness by becoming the first man to kayo Julio Gonzalez last August. What a shame that the heavy-punching Floridian hasn't fought since and had nothing scheduled as of press time. That's one way to go directly from Cloud Nine to Cloud None.

Think About It: Boxers often say that getting to the top is easy compared to staying on top. That's definitely proven true as far as THE RING light heavyweight title is concerned; nobody since Jones has been able to make two successful defenses of the belt. Tarver took it from Jones and lost it to Johnson in his first

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Tavoris Cloud

BEST BOXER
Bernard Hopkins

MOST PROTECTED
Zsolt Erdei

MOST AVOIDED
Glen Johnson

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Byron Mitchell

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Bernard Hopkins-Chad Dawson

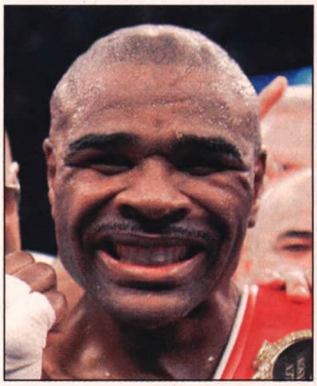
DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Bernard Hopkins

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Glen Johnson

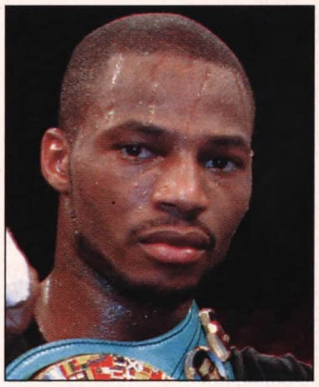
ON THE WAY UP
Beibut Shumenov

ON THE WAY DOWN
Antonio Tarver

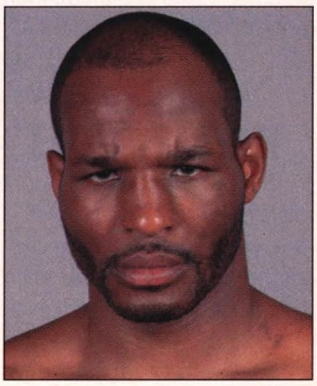
BEST FIGHT IN 2008
Chad Dawson W 12
Glen Johnson



Glen Johnson



Chad Dawson



Bernard Hopkins

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Mikkel Kessler

BEST BOXER
Mikkel Kessler

MOST PROTECTED
Adonis Stevenson

MOST AVOIDED
Sakio Bika

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Demetrius Davis

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Mikkel Kessler-Kelly Pavlik

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Librado Andrade

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Carl Froch

ON THE WAY UP
Andre Ward

ON THE WAY DOWN
Peter Manfredo Jr.

BEST FIGHT IN 2008
Carl Froch W 12
Jean Pascal

defense. Then Johnson lost it back to Tarver in his first defense. Then Tarver made one successful defense (against Jones) and lost it to Hopkins in his second defense. Hopkins made one defense (against Winky Wright) before losing the championship to Calzaghe. And Calzaghe made one defense (against Jones), then announced his retirement.

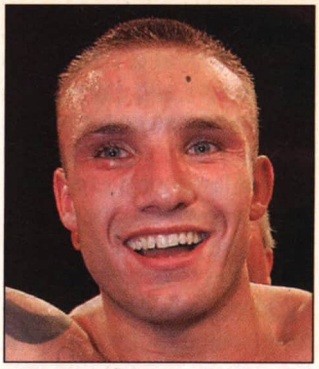
SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT

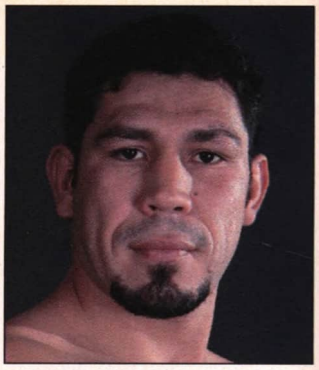
For the super middleweight division, we have completed the year 0 A.C. (After Calzaghe), the first full year since the man who reigned over this weight class for an entire decade vacated his belts, and, frankly, the outlook isn't all that interesting. In other words, the outlook is precisely the same as it was for much of Calzaghe's reign.

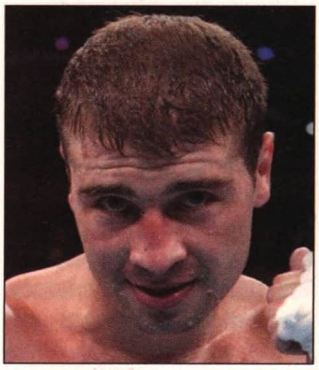
Let's face it: Outside of the U.K., nobody cared about 168 pounds until the final two years of Calzaghe's tenure. Now we're back to where we were from about '96-'06, looking at a division with some parity, some intriguing names, but no obvious superfights. And that sure sounds like the ingredients for a division that would instantly become infinitely more appealing if it had a universally recognized champion.

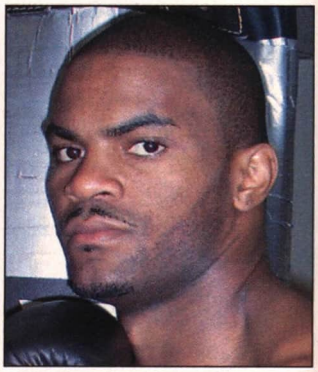
To crown a RING champ in the year 1 A.C., it would take a meeting between **Mikkel Kessler** and **Lucian Bute**, a quality fight between two classy boxers with both skill and power. Kessler has shown a disappointing reluctance to test himself since his competitive loss to Calzaghe in '07, but the 30-year-old Dane remains the class of the division for now. Bute, on the other hand, has been tested of late—perhaps a bit too much for his liking, as he was mere seconds (or a different ref) away from losing his unbeaten record against **Librado Andrade** last October. A Bute-Andrade rematch is looming, and a convincing win by the Montreal-based Romanian would create a modicum of dispute over whether Kessler is indeed the man to beat at super middle.

If we can't have a Kessler-Bute fight, the most attractive substitute would involve either Bute or Kessler against **Carl Froch**, who is now a major player at 168 thanks to his come-from-behind kayo of **Jermain Taylor**. The division also boats reality read deal **Sakio Bika**, heavy punchers


Mikkel Kessler


Librado Andrade


Lucian Bute


Allan Green

Allan Green and **Edison Miranda**, and veteran **Anthony Mundine**, who may down to middleweight if he is successful in his match with Daniel Geale. Then there are **Karoly Balzsy** and **Denis Inkin**, both world-class competitors, if not exactly lucrative opponents for Kessler or Bute.

Think About It: How many U.S. Olympic boxers does it take to screw in a light bulb? Well, we actually don't know the answer to that question, but we can answer this one: How many U.S. Olympic boxers can you fit in one weight class? Incredibly, five. There are currently five American Olympians campaigning at super middleweight: from the class of 2000, Taylor and **Jeff Lacy**; from the class of '04, **Andre Ward** and **Andre Dirrell**; and from the class of '08, **Shawn Estrada**. And remember, we're only one more comeback by a slightly paunchier **Raul Marquez** away from expanding that number to six.

MIDDLEWEIGHT

What is it that they say about the best-laid plans? For lineal middleweight champion of the world **Kelly Pavlik**, the grand plans of a year ago have been scrapped and totally re-mapped. That wouldn't be so unusual if he'd been dethroned, but interestingly, he's still the champ and the plan has been dramatically altered anyway.

The plan *was* to turn him into the biggest star in American boxing by keeping him winning and keeping his fights accessible. Instead, three of his last four fights have been on pay-per-view, his next fight is scheduled for PPV, and his unbeaten record is gone thanks to a

foolish (at least in hindsight) attempt to defeat Bernard Hopkins at a catchweight of 170 pounds. Since Pavlik won the middleweight crown, his only fight that was shown live on HBO was a pointless blowout of **Gary Lockett**. Needless to say, it's been a negative-progress year for the champ.

On the flip side, **Arthur Abraham**, relatively unknown on these shores a year ago, made some positive progress with a dominant knockout of Edison Miranda. He's still not a star in America, but he's known enough that a hardcore fan's dream fight against Pavlik could be realistic by year's end. That's assuming Pavlik gets through a July defense against **Sergio Mora**, which is a reasonably safe assumption.

MIDDLEWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Arthur Abraham

BEST BOXER
Paul Williams

MOST PROTECTED
Travis Loveless

MOST AVOIDED
Paul Williams

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Howard Eastman

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Kelly Pavlik-Arthur Abraham

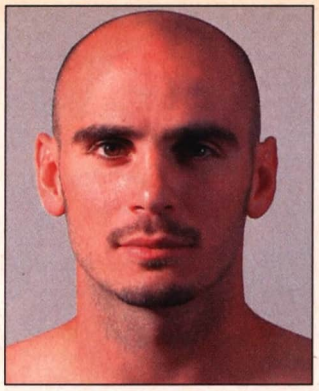
DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Arthur Abraham

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Kelly Pavlik

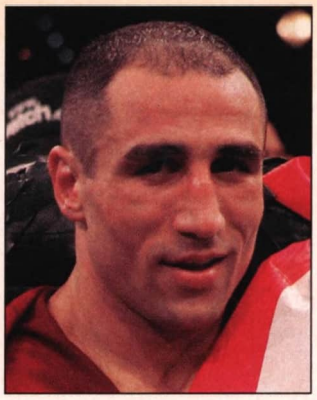
ON THE WAY UP
Peter Quillin

ON THE WAY DOWN
James McGirt Jr.

BEST FIGHT IN 2008
John Duddy W 10
Walid Smichet



Kelly Pavlik



Arthur Abraham

(Quick side note, as long as we're on the subject of Pavlik and Abraham: The "Best Puncher" category in the sidebar was a true tossup between these two kayo artists, but since Abraham has been scoring the more sensational knockouts lately, we gave him the nod.)

Beyond Pavlik and Abraham, there's really only one other name of great interest at 160 pounds: **Paul Williams**. With arms long enough to touch any ceiling, the truth is we don't know what Williams' ceiling is, both in terms of how high he can rise in weight and how high he can rise on the pound-for-pound list. His one-sided win over **Winky Wright** in April was a real eye-opener in that it demonstrated he can pose the same problems for elite fighters as he does for the B-level guys.

The rest of the division is filled mostly with veteran names that don't really factor into the legitimate title picture. At age 37, Wright would still be favored over anyone other than Pavlik, Abraham, and Williams, and that includes **Felix Sturm**, **Sebastian Sylvester**, **Khoren Gevor**, **Randy Griffin**, and **David Lopez**.

Think About It: There are streaky fighters. And then there's **Alexis Divison**. The Dominican middleweight (who also fights at junior middle) lost his first pro fight, then rattled off 16 straight wins from 2001-2004, and has since lost nine in a row. Of course, it's not hard to figure out why he's been so streaky: Of the 16 wins, 13 came against opponents with losing records and all 16 fights were in the Dominican Republic. Of the nine defeats, all came against opponents with winning records and all took place in the United States. As long as Divison keeps fighting good opposition, it doesn't look like this downward spiral is going to end anytime soon.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT

In the post-De La Hoya era, the 154-pound class can pretty much be divided into two categories: uninteresting older fighters, and highly interesting younger fighters. In other words, this is a division that has been in a semi-lull recently, but might soon snap out of it.

Just for fun, let's start with the young guys who have us excited. There's **Paul Williams**, who may or may not end up campaigning in this division, but who is almost definitely the man to beat if he does. There's **James Kirkland**, an all-offense badass with 21 knockouts in 24 fights. Unfortunately, Kirkland is currently incarcerated on gun and parole violation charges and could be out of action for a long time. There's Mexican **Alfredo Angulo**, who is approximately Kirkland's equal in badass-edness. There's **Joe Greene**, who has a New York promotional push and seemingly the talent to back it up. There's **Deandre Latimore**, who came from nowhere to upset **Sechew Powell** last June, but recently lost a split decision to **Cory Spinks**. And there's **Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.**, who doesn't seem to be a special talent or even a very hard worker, but he's never boring and he's one of the

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
James Kirkland

BEST BOXER
Paul Williams

MOST PROTECTED
Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.

MOST AVOIDED
Paul Williams

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Hector Camacho Sr.

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
James Kirkland-Alfredo Angulo

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Sergio Martinez

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Alfredo Angulo

ON THE WAY UP
Vanes Martirosyan

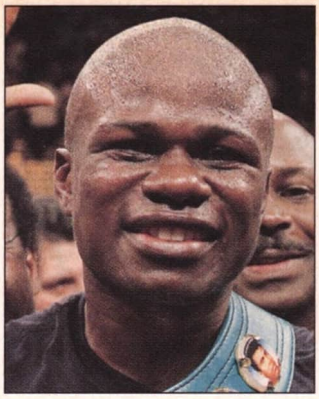
ON THE WAY DOWN
Joel Julio

BEST FIGHT IN 2008
Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. W 10 Matt Vanda (first fight)

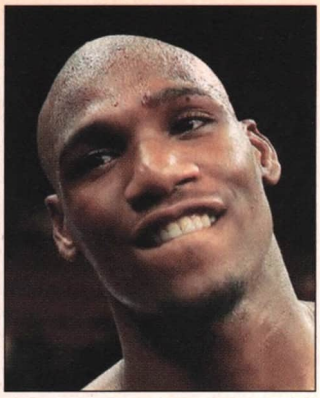
most reliable ticketsellers in the sport.

The best part: Every one of those fighters is 27 or younger. None of them have hit their primes yet.

As for the group of guys about whom we're frankly not all that excited, every one of them most definitely has hit his prime already. There's **Vernon Forrest**, who's 38 and has slipped enough to split two fights with **Sergio Mora**. There's the 39-year-old **Verno Phillips** and the 31-year-old Spinks, who fought on nearly even terms in March '08 in a typically (for Spinks) boring encounter. There's **Daniel Santos**, who can be an exciting puncher when he wants to be, but rarely wants to be. And there's **Ricardo Mayorga**, who may be crazy, but not as crazy as someone would have to be to care about "El Matador's" career anymore.



Vernon Forrest



Paul Williams

It must be noted that the division also includes two fighters who can't be placed in either of the two categories because they're on the old side, but have us interested to some degree. We're highly interested in late-bloomer **Sergio Martinez**, a fast-handed and fleet-footed 34-year-old from Spain who has become a serious player in the past year. And we're moderately interested in **Sergei Dzindziruk**, who's 33, unbeaten, and has never fought outside of Europe.

Think About It: If only one out of every seven people in the world is left-handed, then why does the whole darned junior middleweight division fight out of the southpaw stance? Six of the 10 fighters rated by THE RING at 154 pounds are lefties: Williams, Spinks, Martinez, Dzindziruk, Santos, and Kirkland (not to mention almost-top-10 junior middles **Jamie Moore** and **Deandre Latimore**). Do you think that in this division, managers try to keep their fighters away from orthodox opponents because nobody's used to fighting righties?

WELTERWEIGHT

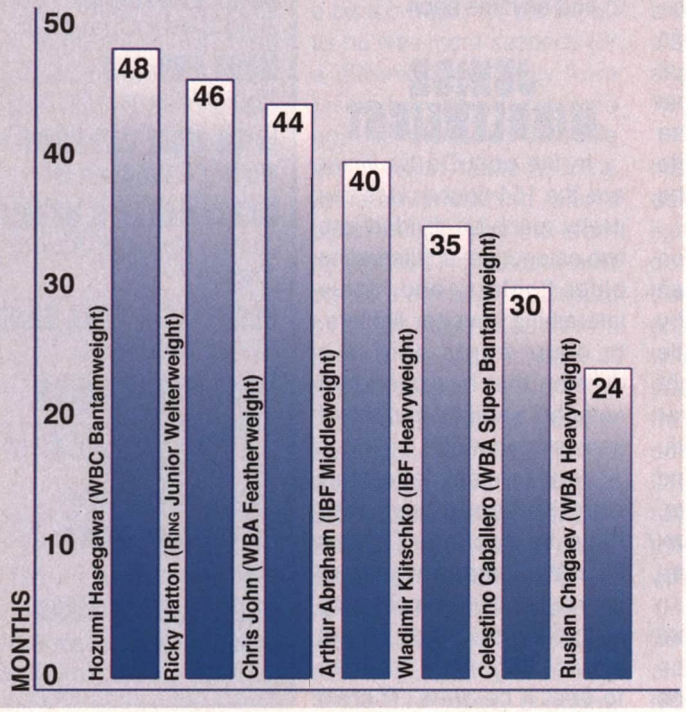
There are two parts to the 147-pound division: The definite factors and the X-factors. Even without all of the X-factors, this is a damned strong weight class. But when you add the X-factors in, this is potentially one of the most intriguing fields in recent boxing history.

Let's start with the definites, the reliables, the guys we know are active and we know are competing at welterweight. At the top of the heap for now is **Shane Mosley**, who instantly erased seven years of mixed results with a career-defining knockout of **Antonio Margarito** in January. Right on Mosley's heels is **Miguel Cotto**, who holds a close November '07 decision win over Mosley and whose only loss is a now-controversial defeat to Margarito.

In June, Cotto is scheduled to face the next-most-established fighter in the division, **Joshua Clottey**, a relentless pressure fighter hoping to break through to the elite level. Speaking of fighters seemingly on the verge of breaking through, **Andre Berto** might just be the future of the division (or at least an exciting contender for years to come), while **Luis Collazo** gave Berto hell earlier this year and is deserving of a rematch. Add in capable

LONGEST REIGNING TITLISTS

The graph below illustrates the game's most established titlists (RING, WBC, WBA, or IBF), along with the number of consecutive months each has held the title. Last year's top three, Yutaka Niida, Wladimir Sidorenko, and Clinton Woods, have all been dethroned, making room for three new names—including one who has barely had his belt for two years. It used to be that this chart was topped by fighters with five, six, maybe seven years of tenure, and that you needed about three years to crack the top seven. But long reigns are harder to come by these days. Sometimes that's for a good reason: beltholders taking risks and losing to tough opponents. And sometimes it's for a pathetic reason: alphabet bodies stripping fighters at a breakneck pace.



WELTERWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Miguel Cotto

BEST BOXER
Shane Mosley

MOST PROTECTED
Yuriy Nuzhnenko

MOST AVOIDED
Carlos Quintana

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Diobelys Hurtado

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Floyd Mayweather-Shane Mosley

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Luis Collazo

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Miguel Cotto

ON THE WAY UP
Mike Jones

ON THE WAY DOWN
Lovemore Ndou

BEST FIGHT IN 2008
Antonio Margarito KO 11 Miguel Cotto

veterans **Carlos Quintana** and **Zab Judah**, and you can see there's no lack of depth at 147 pounds.

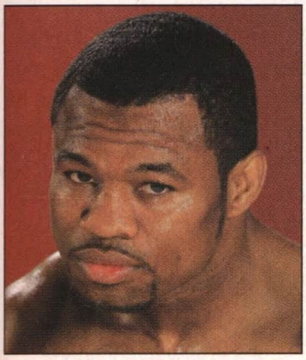
And it gets outrageously deep when you add in the X-factors. Margarito is currently suspended from fighting in the U.S. for the loaded-handwraps controversy that surrounded his loss to Mosley. He's an X-factor not only because he's temporarily (or perhaps permanently) out of the mix, but also because nobody knows how many of his wins were kosher or just how good he really is. In the accompanying sidebar, we considered the possibility that Margarito should be named "Best Puncher" over Cotto, but how can anyone say that for sure?

Paul Williams is a major X-factor, since he's beaten Margarito and would be a scary opponent for anyone, though he seems to have left the division. For the right fight, however, he claims he can still make 147.

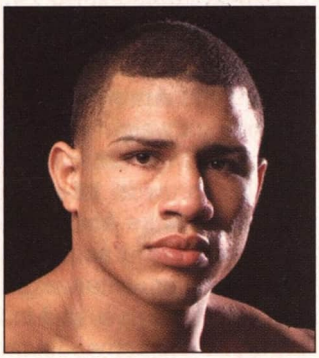
Manny Pacquiao is a huge-money fight for any of the top welterweights, but whether he'll remain at 140 or return to 147, where he routed Oscar De La Hoya last December, is unclear.

And then there's the ultimate X-factor, **Floyd Mayweather**, who was the welterweight champ and the pound-for-pound king when he announced his retirement from boxing a year ago. Since he hasn't been active, we couldn't call him the "Best Boxer" in our sidebar, even though there's no finer technician in the game. If "Pretty Boy" returns, a near-certainty as we went to press, then that changes everything. Like the rest of the X-factors, he could instantly make boxing's hottest division positively scorching.

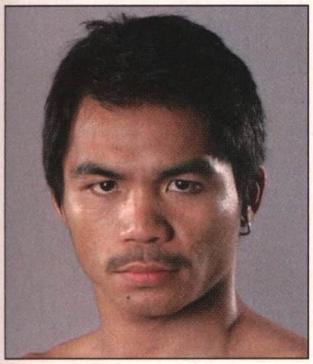
Think About It: Many writers have pointed out the styles-make-fights oddity that is Mosley beating Margarito, who beat Cotto, who beat Mosley. But do you realize this is the third such oddity in which Mosley has been involved? He also twice beat Fernando Vargas, who decisioned Winky Wright, who twice topped Mosley. And he kayoed Ricardo Mayorga, who twice defeated Vernon Forrest, who twice outpointed Mosley. What does it all mean? Here's one thing it means: Whether he's won or lost, Sugar Shane has fought a heck of a lot of elite opposition in his Hall of Fame career. Seriously, look at those names. And that's without even mentioning Oscar De La Hoya or any of the fine lightweights Mosley dispatched back in the '90s.



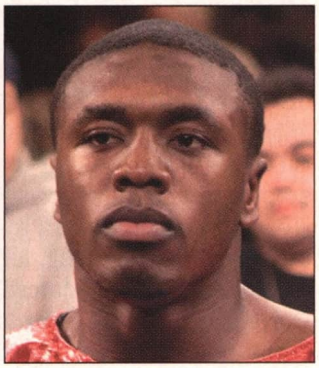
Shane Mosley



Miguel Cotto



Manny Pacquiao



Andre Berto

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT

During the **Timothy Bradley-Kendall Holt** alphabet unification bout on April 4, Showtime presented a graphic showing the "world champions" in the division, and it featured both Bradley and Holt, as well as **Andres Kotelnik** and **Juan Urango**. Conspicuous by his absence was **Ricky Hatton**, the man through whom the division's only real world championship lineage runs. It was a despicable omission by Showtime, which continues to enable the alphabet creeps while ignoring THE RING championship. But thankfully, Showtime doesn't write "The State Of The

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Randall Bailey

BEST BOXER
Timothy Bradley

MOST PROTECTED
Ajose Olusegun

MOST AVOIDED
Junior Witter

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Raul Balbi

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Manny Pacquiao-Juan Manuel Marquez III

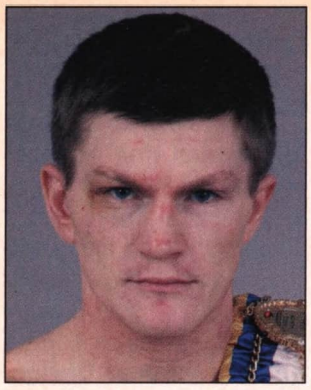
DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Timothy Bradley

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Manny Pacquiao

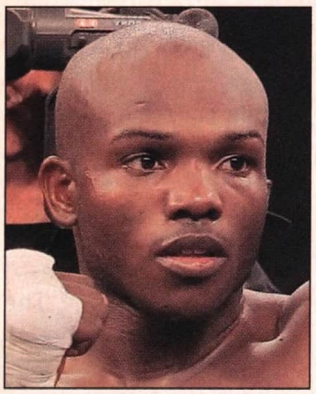
ON THE WAY UP
Mike Alvarado

ON THE WAY DOWN
Jorge Paez Jr.

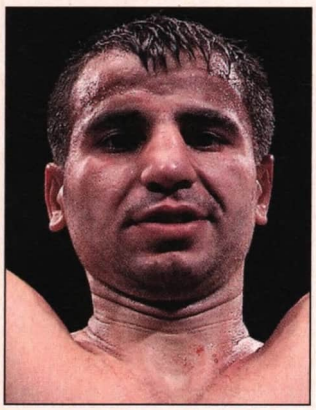
BEST FIGHT IN 2008
Kendall Holt KO 1 Ricardo Torres



Ricky Hatton



Timothy Bradley



Andreas Kotelnik

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Kendall Holt stops Ricardo Torres in one

Game." If they did, you'd think this was a weak, star-starved division. In reality, it's a compelling weight class with its share of star power—you just have to look beyond the alphabet titlists.

You can look elsewhere in this magazine for all the information you can handle on the Hatton-**Manny Pacquiao** superfight. All you need to know is that was a true championship fight and those are the two biggest stars at 140 pounds.

And it's a deep division below them, packed with solid beltholders, dangerous veterans, and intriguing up-and-comers. First, the beltholders: Bradley has separated himself from the pack with hard-fought wins over the talented duo of Holt and **Junior Witter**, but he'll need to do more to lure the RING champ into the ring. Kotelnik is a smart boxer, Urango a dangerous puncher, and both have proven worthy of top-five rankings.

As for the veterans, the division offers punchers (**Randall Bailey**, **Ricardo Torres**), boxers (**Paulie Malignaggi**), and boxer-punchers (Junior Witter, who may have more trouble than ever landing a fight now that he's been defeated by Bradley). There's also former lightweight titlist **Nate Campbell**, who's unproven at this weight but instantly became one of the division's biggest names when he couldn't make 135 pounds anymore.

Moving on to the prospects, how's this lineup of under-25 talents: **Victor Ortiz** (possibly the most marketable young American in the sport), **Lamont Peterson**, **Marcos Maidana**, **Devon Alexander**, and **Amir Khan** (a natural lightweight moving up to challenge Kotelnik for a belt). Throw in 28-year-old banger **Mike Alvarado**, and you have a seriously stacked junior welterweight division—both now, and for a few years to come.

Think About It: Usually when a pure puncher starts losing—especially when he starts getting knocked out—the fade to obscurity is underway. In light of that, isn't Bailey's resurgence both surprising and impressive? He got knocked out by Diobelys Hurtado in '02, totally outboxed by DeMarcus Corley in '03, lost one of those can't-catch-a-break decisions to Ishe Smith in '04, and then got wrecked by Miguel Cotto later that same year. He had also just turned 30. Admit it: You thought he was done. But here he is, more than four years later, with only one loss in 12 fights and it was a questionable hometown decision to **Herman Ngoudjo**. Do his legs still look shaky? Yep. Can he still be outboxed by a slick guy? Absolutely. But at 34, he still has the name value to land a major opportunity and a puncher's chance against anyone.

LIGHTWEIGHT

The cliché tells us that a year can make quite a bit of difference, but it's still hard to believe the shakeup that's taken place at lightweight in the past 365 days. The world championship has changed hands and five of THE RING's top-10 contenders have been replaced. And much of the movement has been of the "youth" variety. In fact, in the space of a

LIGHTWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Edwin Valero

BEST BOXER
Juan Manuel Marquez

MOST PROTECTED
Mickey Bey Jr.

MOST AVOIDED
Joan Guzman

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Justin Juuko

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Juan Manuel Marquez-Edwin Valero

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Edwin Valero

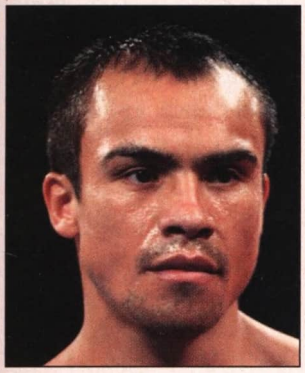
MOST FUN TO WATCH
Michael Katsidis

ON THE WAY UP
Breidis Prescott

ON THE WAY DOWN
Almazbek Raiymkulov

BEST FIGHT IN 2008
Joel Casamayor KO 10 Michael Katsidis

Edwin Valero



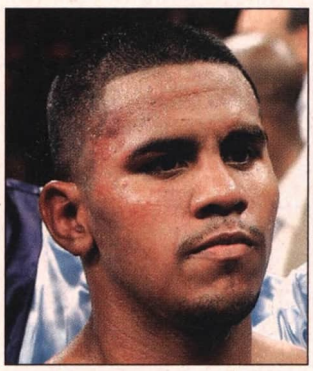
Juan Manuel Marquez

single weekend in April, the average age of the top 10 went down more than two years, from 29.7 to 27.4.

Gone from the rankings are the likes of Nate Campbell (couldn't make weight), **David Diaz**, **Julio Diaz**, **Jose Santa Cruz**, and **Zahir Raheem**, plus unranked veterans **Marco Antonio Barrera**, **Jesus Chavez**, and **Carlos Hernandez** all lost at lightweight in March or April. Rising and replacing those experienced fighters are the likes of **Edwin Valero**, **Rolando Reyes**, **Ali Funeka**, and **Breidis Prescott**. It's a very different looking lightweight division. But for the most part, it looks different in a good way, with fighters whose best days lie ahead supplanting those whose best days have already gone by.

And that's also true to an extent at the very top. **Juan Manuel Marquez** might have his best days ahead of him at age 35, and he likely still has his best paydays ahead of him, whereas the man he dethroned for the legit title, **Joel Casamayor**, is a couple of years older and a lot closer to the end of the line.

Interestingly, there are three fighters who have held fairly steady in the rankings despite suffering defeats in the past year.



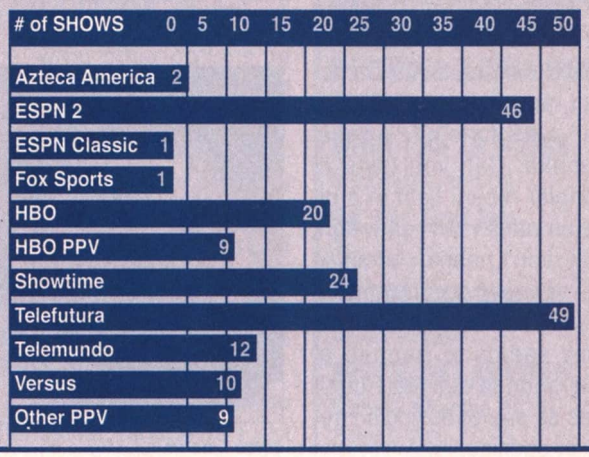
Juan Diaz

PHOTO BY RYAN PIERSE/GETTY IMAGES

Michael Katsidis is one of the most exciting lightweights in the world

BOXING ON TV

While the boxing world constantly changes and evolves, the numbers for boxing on television in 2008 were remarkably unchanged from 2007. There were just the slightest tweaks—one less ESPN2 broadcast, one more HBO Pay-Per-View show, etc. And the numbers were exactly the same as in '07 for ESPN Classic, HBO, Telemundo, Versus, and independent pay-per-views. Overall, the totals were down ever so slightly, from 189 to 183, a negligible difference when spread over 52 weeks. Expect some movement in '09, with HBO PPV lightening its load in a struggling economy, Telefutura out of the mix, and Azteca America stepping up to a degree. But for now, this graph looks an awful lot like it did last year:



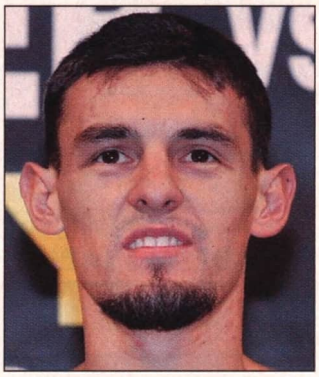
Juan Diaz got kayoed by Marquez, **Michael Katsidis** got outboxed by "Baby Bull" Diaz, and **Amir Khan** got flattened by Prescott, only to bounce back with a win over Barrera. All have lost some of their luster, but all remain contenders, though Khan might be done with the lightweight division as he pursues an alphabet strap at 140.

Incredibly, the fun at 135 pounds doesn't end with the top 10. This division has some serious depth, with probably the strongest 11-20 field in the sport. In no particular order, here are 10 lightweights not currently ranked by THE RING: **Joan Guzman**, David Diaz, Julio Diaz, Chavez, Hernandez, **Antonio Pitalua**, Santa Cruz, **Vicente Escobedo**, **Antonio DeMarco**, and **Paulus Moses**. That's a nice mix of talent and credentials for a group of guys in the second 10.

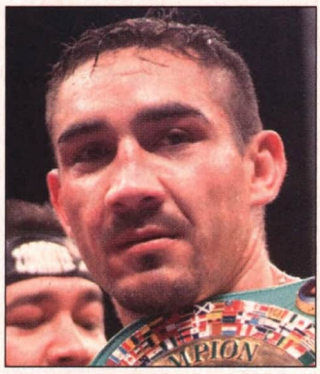
Think About It: What is it about the 135-pound limit that makes it so difficult for a fighter to make weight? Think about the weigh-in disasters in boxing over the last three years or so; nearly all of them have taken place at lightweight. There were the second and (intended) third bouts in the Jose Luis Castillo-Diego Corrales series, there was Guzman's scheduled bout with Campbell, and there was Campbell's title forfeiture against Funeka. Can you think of a major recent fight in a division *other than* lightweight that didn't happen because someone couldn't make weight? The fact that this only seems to happen at 135 pounds definitely qualifies as one of boxing's foremost oddities.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT

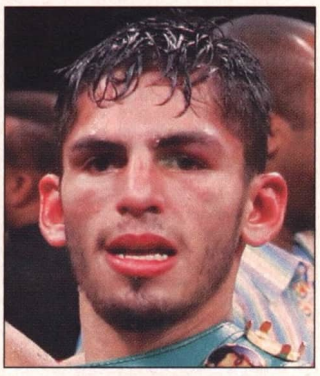
The revolving door at junior lightweight continues to revolve, with the likes of Edwin Valero, Joan Guzman, Jorge Barrios, and Alex Arthur moving up to lightweight, and **Jorge Linares** and **Robert Guerrero** coming up from featherweight. Unfortunately, so far, the newcomers haven't exactly created a splash, which is impressive if you're a diver, but unimpressive in every other sport. Ultra-talented



Robert Guerrero



Humberto Soto



Jorge Linares

Venezuelan Linares has been injury-riddled and has fought only once at the weight, a meaningless kayo of club-fighter **Whyber Garcia** (which was, sadly, enough to bag Linares a vacant belt). Guerrero, meanwhile, has had two fights at 130, but one was a mismatch that ended in 43 seconds, and the other, against **Daud Yordan**, ended in a second-round no-contest because "The Ghost" essentially requested that result.

So without much in the way of achievement from the new blood, we're left with several of the same old faces and with a division that isn't all that interesting. The clear division leader, partially through attrition, is **Humberto Soto**, a strong puncher and well-schooled veteran whose bogus disqualification loss to **Francisco Lorenzo** is already way back in the rearview mirror. Hot-and-cold **Malcolm Klassen** recently turned in the best performance of his career, knocking out fellow South African **Cassius Baloyi** to regain the IBF strap and again become a significant factor in the division. **Mzonke Fana**, who Baloyi beat to win the title, remains a top-10 fighter, but is 35 and running out of time.

Thankfully, there are two relative newcomers worth keeping an eye on: Mexican **Urbano Antillon** and Puerto Rican **Roman Martinez**. Antillon is creating a buzz by scoring knockouts, eight straight to be precise. Several have come on national TV, most notably a first-round blowout of Bobby Pacquiao on Versus. Martinez is less known to American audiences, but his off-the-floor kayo of **Nicky Cook** for the WBO strap in March '09 has us on notice that he could become a top fighter—or at least an entertaining one.

Think About It: In the sidebars that accompany each division, perhaps no category in the entire "State Of The Game" was tougher than naming someone who "Deserves A Title Shot" at 130 pounds. You can't consider the alphabet titlist, so Soto, Klassen, Martinez, and Linares are out. Fana lost to Baloyi two fights ago and simply isn't an A-level fighter. Antillon is still a little bit on the unproven side. Cook got knocked out in his last fight. Guerrero hasn't done much in the division and definitely needs to do

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Urbano Antillon

BEST BOXER
Jorge Linares

MOST PROTECTED
Alejandro Sanabria

MOST AVOIDED
Humberto Soto

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Kevin Kelley

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Humberto Soto-Jorge Linares

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Rocky Juarez

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Roman Martinez

ON THE WAY UP
Urbano Antillon

ON THE WAY DOWN
Francisco Lorenzo

BEST FIGHT IN 2008
Manny Pacquiao W 12
Juan Manuel Marquez

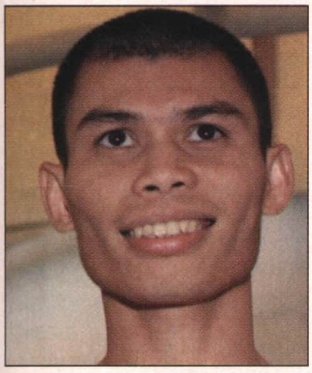
something positive in the wake of the Yordan fight. Barrios wouldn't be a terrible choice, but he's moving up in weight and lost his last time out. So the guy Barrios lost to, **Rocky Juarez**, seems the most deserving of a shot. Who cares if Juarez is currently campaigning at featherweight? His resume at 130 makes him as worthy as anyone else.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

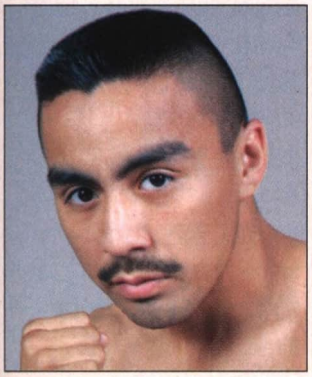
Mario Santiago jolts Steven Luevano with a left

FEATHERWEIGHT

Last year, our selection for "Matchmaker's Dream" in this division was a clash of talented young titlists Robert Guerrero and Jorge Linares. A year later, both fighters are at 130 pounds and haven't been replaced by noteworthy 122-pounders moving up to 126. On paper, that sounds like a formula for rendering the featherweights irrelevant. But, oddly enough, the division is hanging in there just fine thanks to three entertaining fights in the past year that are worthy of rematches and one polarizing prospect who may already be closing in on a title shot.



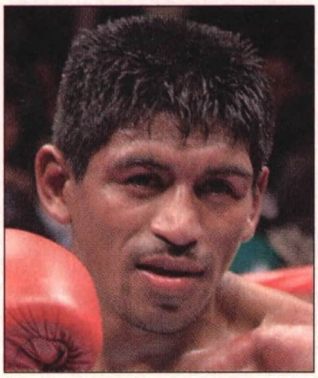
Chris John



Rocky Juarez

One of those three entertaining fights came in February '09 at the top of the division, with number-one RING-rated **Chris John** settling for a draw against **Rocky Juarez** in the former U.S. Olympian's hometown of Houston. A rematch isn't exactly a superfight, but it's as big as it gets in the featherweight division right now, and as of press time it appeared likely to happen.

We got an unexpected thriller in June '08 when **Steven Luevano**, a light-hitting but skillful southpaw, was pushed to his limits by fellow lefty **Mario Santiago**. Like John-Juarez, the fight ended in a draw. Unlike John-Juarez, there hasn't been much rematch talk. Still their barnburner helped raise the profile of both fighters.



Cristobal Cruz

And the best of them all came when two journeymen, **Rogers Mtagwa** and **Tomas Villa**, went to war in one of the final fights on Telefutura's *Solo Boxeo* series, with Mtagwa getting off the canvas in the ninth to knock Villa out in the 10th. There hasn't been much rematch chatter, but there certainly should be; what other options do these guys have that will generate interest?

The rest of the division is mostly a blur of Mexican and Japanese fighters with solid but unspectacular credentials, including: **Jorge Solis**, **Martin Honorio**, **Cristobal Cruz**, **Hiroyuki Enoki**, and **Takahiro Aoh**.

There is one fighter who stands out, though he's just cracked THE RING's top 10. Miami-based Cuban prospect **Yuriorkis Gamboa** has alarming hand speed and impeccable amateur

FEATHERWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Yuriorkis Gamboa

BEST BOXER
Chris John

MOST PROTECTED
Chonlatarn Piriyapinyo

MOST AVOIDED
Billy Dib

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Guty Espadas Jr.

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Chris John-Rocky Juarez II

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Jorge Solis

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Yuriorkis Gamboa

ON THE WAY UP
Orlando Cruz

ON THE WAY DOWN
Cruz Carbajal

BEST FIGHT IN 2008
Rogers Mtagwa KO 10 Tomas Villa

credentials, but he also has a reckless streak and has been on the floor three times already in just 14 fights. Some view him as a future pound-for-pounder; others see him as a kayo victim waiting to happen. Either way, you can't take your eyes off him.

If you're looking for the polar opposite of that statement, look no further than Aussie stinker **Billy Dib**. We went ahead and listed Dib as the "Most Avoided" fighter in the accompanying sidebar, but it's important that we point out that it's not because anybody is afraid of him. We just expect him to be avoided because we can't imagine any top fighter wanting to share a ring with an entertainment vortex like Dib.

Think About It: You might think you'd have to go back a little ways in history to find a fighter who could equal Juarez' mark of five alphabet title shots (if you count his "interim" title fight loss to Humberto Soto) without a win; turns out we only have to go back four years and we can find one right here in this very same division. Victor Polo came up short against Manuel Medina in '99, Derrick Gainer in '01, Julio Pablo Chacon in '02, Scott Harrison in '05 (a draw), and Juan Manuel Marquez later that same year. Of course, Juarez might just get a sixth shot, whereas Polo appears to be done, having not fought since the Marquez defeat.

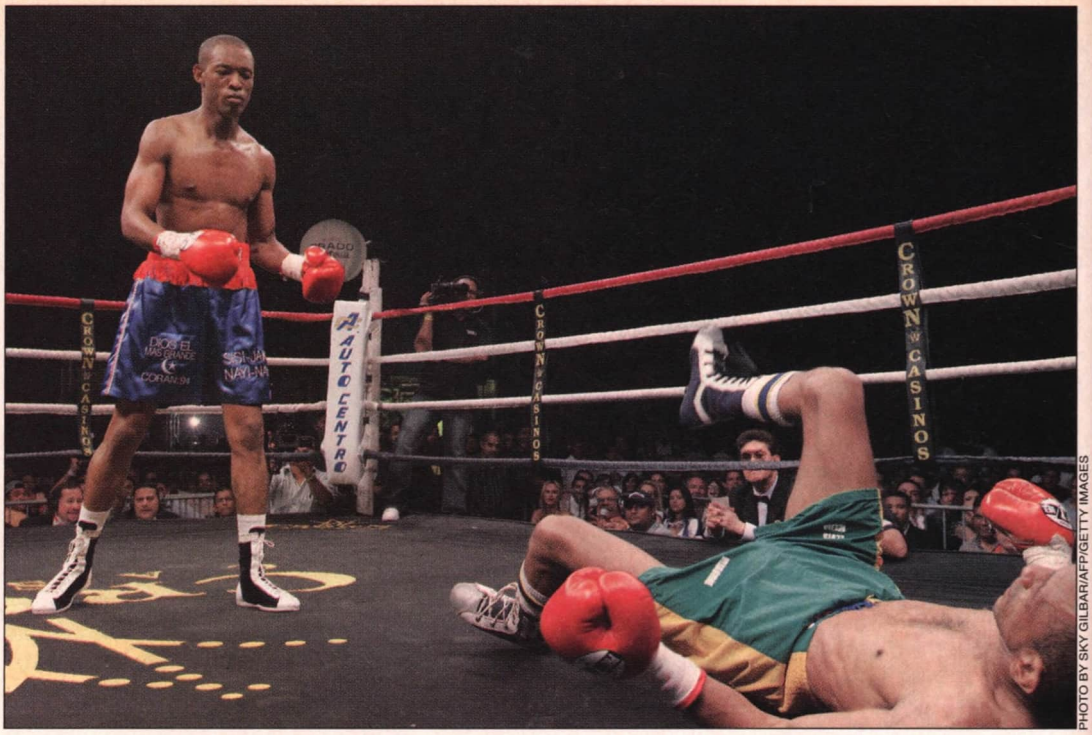


PHOTO BY SKY GILBAR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Celestino Caballero puts Elvis Mejia on the floor

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT

What a truly exceptional weight class this would be ... if the champ and his top contender ever actually entered a prize ring. Even the loaded welterweight class has nothing on junior feather when it comes to the talent of the top four, three of whom are in THE RING's pound-for-pound top 10, with a fourth who actually might be better than any of the other three right now. That fourth is **Juan Manuel Lopez**, who is the least proven of the quartet but appears to be among the most complete boxer-punchers in all of boxing. And the men he's looking up at, at least for now, are world champion **Israel Vazquez**, **Rafael Marquez**, and **Celestino Caballero**. Talk about a foursome where any pairing makes hardcore fans salivate.

Unfortunately, since Vazquez and Marquez staged their remarkable third battle in March '08, neither has fought. Vazquez has a fine excuse: He's had multiple surgeries on his retina, and let's face it, it's worth a frustrating layoff to save your eyesight. Marquez had a good excuse for a little while; he was recovering from his bruising wars with Vazquez and waiting for his rival to possibly agree to fight number four. But he should have been back in action by now. At age 34, he doesn't have much time to waste.

Caballero is getting up there in age also at 32, but the lanky Panamanian has been making good use of his time, unifying alphabet belts by pummeling previously unbeaten **Steve Molitor** last November. At just 25 years of age, Lopez has more time on his side than any of them. And the Puerto Rican phenom is making decent use of his time, fighting every two to four months. But he still isn't logging much ring time, since he's blown

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Juan Manuel Lopez

BEST BOXER
Juan Manuel Lopez

MOST PROTECTED
Wilfredo Vazquez Jr.

MOST AVOIDED
Celestino Caballero

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Esham Pickering

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Israel Vazquez-Juan Manuel Lopez

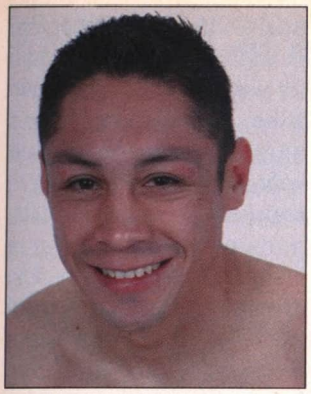
DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Celestino Caballero

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Israel Vazquez

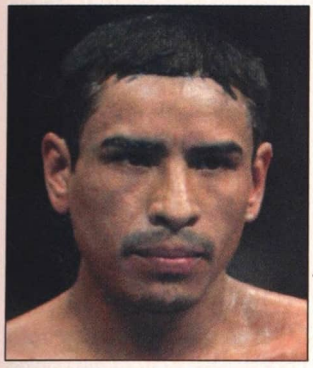
ON THE WAY UP
Antonio Escalante

ON THE WAY DOWN
Luis Perez

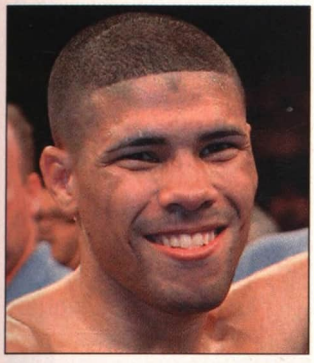
BEST FIGHT IN 2008
Israel Vazquez W 12 Rafael Marquez



Israel Vazquez



Rafael Marquez



Juan Manuel Lopez

out three of his last four opponents in the first round. But the quick kayos ended for Lopez, when Filipino veteran **Gerry Penalosa**, who moved up from bantamweight, lasted nine rounds.

Surprisingly, the drop-off at 122 pounds after the top four isn't outrageously steep. **Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym**, **Jhonny Gonzalez**, and **Ricardo Cordoba** are sturdy veterans. **Daniel Ponce De Leon** and Molitor are young ex-titlists who can hold their own with anyone outside the top four. And Ireland's **Bernard Dunne** has the boxing world buzzing with the way he recovered from a shocking first-round knockout loss in '07 to outslug and outwill Cordoba for an alphabet belt in a 2009 Fight of the Year contender. Last year in our sidebar, we labeled Dunne "On The Way Down," and we're reasonable enough people to admit when we're wrong. In this instance, we couldn't have been more wrong. Dunne has shown he has character to spare, and he's emerged to make a fantastic division that much deeper.

Think About It: When Vazquez-Marquez III was named THE RING's Fight of the Year in 2008, it marked only the fourth time in the 64-year history of the award that the same two fighters shared the honors in back-to-back years. The others: Arturo Gatti and Micky Ward in 2002 and 2003, Ray Robinson and Carmen Basilio in 1957 and '58, and Tony Zale and Rocky Graziano in '46 and '47. It also marked the third time this decade that the same two fighters combined for two Fights of the Year. That list includes Vazquez-Marquez, Gatti-Ward, and Marco Antonio Barrera-Erik Morales, who produced Fights of the Year in 2000 and 2004.

BANTAMWEIGHT

The junior bantamweight division's loss (more on that in the next section) is the bantamweight division's gain, as the top two 115-pounders in the world are both invading 118 and promise to make a solid but somewhat stale division suddenly fresh. Will **Vic Darchinyan** and **Fernando Montiel** prove to be the two best bantamweights on the planet? Time will tell. But they're definitely livening up the division, and who knows, maybe this is the weight class in which we'll get the

BANTAMWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Fernando Montiel

BEST BOXER
Hozumi Hasegawa

MOST PROTECTED
Sasha Bakhtin

MOST AVOIDED
Silence Mabuza

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Malcolm Tunacao

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Joseph Agbeko-
Vic Darchinyan

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Silence Mabuza

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Joseph Agbeko

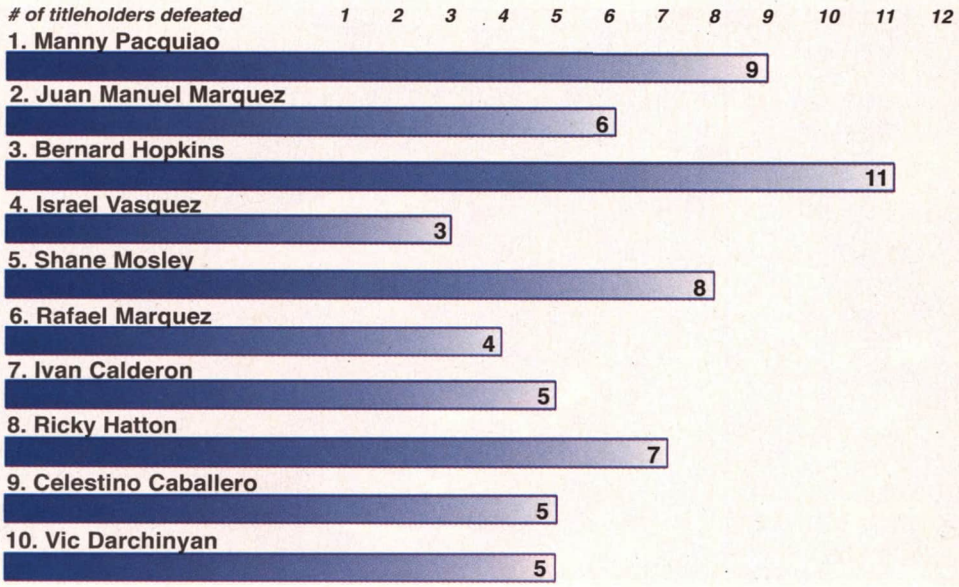
ON THE WAY UP
Nehomar Cermeno

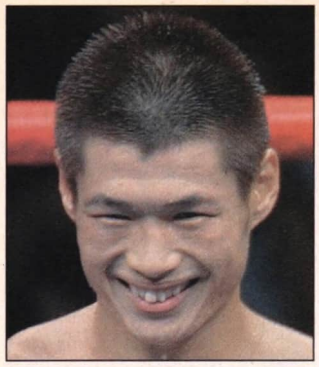
ON THE WAY DOWN
Ratanachai Vorapin

BEST FIGHT IN 2008
Joseph Agbeko W 12
William Gonzalez

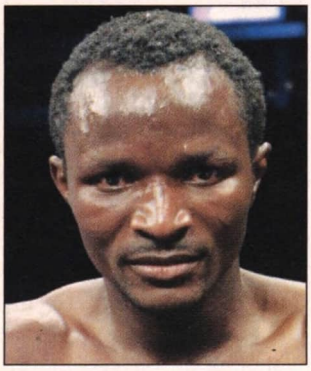
TITLISTS VS. TITLISTS

One of the ways to calculate a fighter's worth is to count the number of champions or titlists he's defeated. Here's how THE RING's pound-for-pound top 10 stack up:





Hozumi Hasegawa



Joseph Agbeko

showdown between them for supremacy that we should have had at 115.

For now, though, supremacy belongs to Japan's **Hozumi Hasegawa**, who's come a long way since losing two of his first five pro bouts. He's won 23 straight and has held his alphabet belt for a full four years, making him the longest-reigning current titlist in the game. He hasn't yet tested himself against the division's best, unfortunately, but against fringe contenders he's looked impressive enough to earn THE RING's number-one ranking.

The next two fighters in the ratings, **Anselmo Moreno** of Panama and **Wladimir Sidorenko** of the Ukraine, were scheduled to fight shortly after our press deadline, in a rematch to a close fight that the slick southpaw Moreno won a year earlier to claim a title. It would be nice to see the winner face Hasegawa and determine a RING champion, but that feels a bit like a pipe dream for now.

Speaking of pipe dreams, is **Silence Mabuza** going to get another shot at the top after two perfectly forgivable losses to the great Rafael Marquez in '05 and '06? We've said it before and we'll say it again: This South African might just be the best bantam in the world, if only he had a chance to prove it.

Fortunately, one matchup that is not a pipe dream is **Joseph "King Kong" Agbeko** against Darchinyan, a guaranteed action fight scheduled for July. The winner of that Showtime-televised bout will be the closest thing this division has to a superstar in America.

It was hoped that **Abner Mares**, a prospect now emerging as a contender, might provide some star power, but his advancement has been slow, with only one fight on his ledger since last year's "State Of The Game" due to an eye injury. Meanwhile, if you're looking for more established names, this division has no lack of proven veterans, such as Montiel, **Roberto Vasquez**, and the comebacking **Eric Morel**.

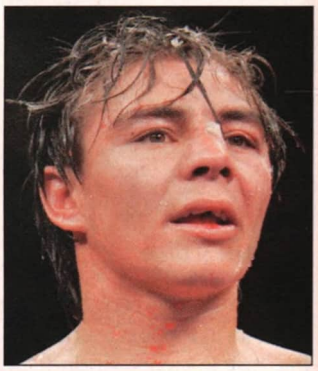
Think About It: Typically, a fighter's knockout ratio goes down as his career moves along. The reasons are obvious: Early on, he's facing stiffs, but once he starts taking on world-class opponents, not to mention probably moving up in weight where his punches are less effective, more of his fights go the distance. Hasegawa, however, is bucking this trend emphatically. Up through his title-winning fight against Veerapol Sahaprom in April '05, Hasegawa had 20 fights and just five kayo wins, suggesting he was all skill and no pop. Since winning a title, he has five knockouts in just eight fights, and his last three fights lasted a total of five rounds. *Most* punchers are born, not made; Hasegawa is proof that *sometimes* power can be taught.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT

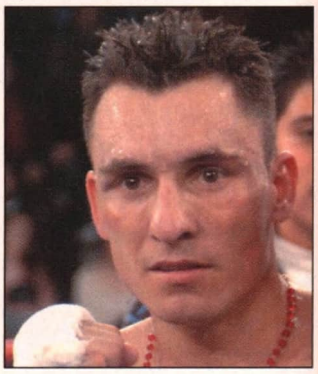
We warned you in the bantamweight section that the junior bantam write-up wouldn't be much fun. Last year in this space, we salivated over a potential Fernando Montiel-Cristian Mijares showdown; both fighters are now campaigning at 118 pounds. And the guy who bumped off Mijares, **Vic Darchinyan**, is set to make his bantamweight debut in

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Vic Darchinyan closes in on the stunned Cristian Mijares



Jorge Arce



Hugo Cazares

THE CHAMPS AND TITLISTS BY COUNTRIES

We knew the United States' standing as the dominant force in boxing was slipping, but this is ridiculous. A year ago, 15 champs/titlists were from the U.S.; that number has been slashed in half in just 12 months, and now the U.S. is the global leader by a margin of only one titlist. Where have all of the belts gone? You can start by looking in Panama, where the number increased from one last year to four now. And more countries than ever have at least one titlist, with 25 nations represented in the chart below.

15 COUNTRIES TIED WITH 1:

Argentina · Australia · Canada · Colombia · Denmark France · Indonesia · Italy · Nicaragua · Philippines Poland · Romania · Russia · South Africa · Thailand

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Vic Darchinyan

BEST BOXER
Z Gorres

MOST PROTECTED
Duangpetch Saengmorakot

MOST AVOIDED
Jesus Jimenez

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Hawk Makepula

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Vic Darchinyan-Nonito Donaire II

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Alexander Munoz

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Jorge Arce

ON THE WAY UP
Arturo Badillo

ON THE WAY DOWN
Luis Maldonado

BEST FIGHT IN 2008
Jorge Arce KO 9 Rafael Concepcion

July. This division's best fighters and biggest stars are all gone, and what's left is a hodge-podge mostly made up of fighters who've been around a little while and have come up short in their biggest fights. There's not much here to salivate over anymore. If you want proof, look at our choice for "Matchmaker's Dream" in the sidebar: We're pairing a soon-to-be-bantamweight, Darchinyan, with a flyweight, Nonito Donaire.

(And while on the subject of our choices for this division's sidebar, just to clarify, since Darchinyan hasn't yet fought at bantam and is still ranked at 115 for now, we went ahead and named him "Best Puncher.")

So who exactly are the top guys now that the *former* top guys have moved on? The number one by default once Darchinyan's name is removed is Venezuela's **Alexander Munoz**, a proven veteran who's enjoyed two alphabet title reigns and has only lost to top talents like Mijares and Martin Castillo, all by decision. Right behind him is Japan's **Nobuo Nashiro**, who holds a win over Castillo and whose

PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Nobio Nashiro connects with a right uppercut against Kohei Kono

only loss came on points against Munoz.

After that, it gets difficult to rank these guys. Former American Olympian **Jose Navarro** hasn't fought in over a year and has been dropped from the rating. Filipino **Z Gorres** has very good southpaw skills, and a split decision loss to Montiel and draw against Darchinyan certainly don't count against him. Darchinyan victims **Jorge Arce** and **Dimitri Kirilov** are both trending downward, while Japan's **Kohei Kono** and **Daiki Kameda** seem to have potential but both lost their biggest fights. Perhaps the most intriguing fighter in the bunch is former RING junior flyweight champion **Hugo Cazares**, who made a minor splash at 115 pounds in March by defeating well-regarded **Roberto Vasquez** in an entertaining scrap.

Think About It: Many of us try to ignore WBO belts because they further dilute an already ridiculous alphabet landscape, but we'll say this about them: Every now and then, they produce a feel-good story worth reporting. Such is the case with **Jose "Carita" Lopez**, the new WBO 115-pound beltholder. Four times between 1996 and 2001, Lopez, then in his 20s, challenged for the WBO flyweight title, and four times he lost unanimous decisions. But between '02 and '09, the Puerto Rican put together a heck of a streak, going 14-0-1 to position himself for a fifth WBO title shot, this time at junior bantam. And in March '09, at age 37, Lopez decisioned 40-year-old **Pramuansak Posuwan** to claim the vacant belt. No, Lopez isn't the "champion of the world"—not even close. He beat an ancient fighter for a bogus vacant strap; it wasn't even enough to get him into THE RING's top 10, which speaks volumes about the difference between real titles and alphabet titles. But it's still an uplifting story about how good things can happen if you don't give up on yourself.

WHAT'S IN, WHAT'S OUT

IN	OUT
Brother Naazim	*Prince Naseem*
The Prudential Center	*The Thomas & Mack Center*
Lennox in the Hall	*Lennox behind the mic*
Juan Manuels (Marquez & Lopez)	*Antonios (Margarito & Tarver)*
Hugo Chavez tattoos	*Mao Tse Tung tattoos*
McCain supporting Jack Johnson	*McCain opposing Barack Obama*
The '08 Olympians as pros	*The '08 Olympians as Olympians*
Oscar's retirement	*Floyd's retirement*
BK	*DK*
Bernard Hopkins	*The aging process*

FLYWEIGHT

With all due respect to **Daisuke Naito**, **Denkaosaen Kaovichit**, **Omar Narvaez**, **Pongsaklek Wonjongkam**, and any other world-class flyweight out there, the current 112-pound division can be summed up with one simple sentence: There's **Nonito Donaire**, and there's everybody else.

Donaire is arguably a top-10 pound-for-pounder, something we haven't seen in this division since Mark Johnson. After all, he holds a spectacular knockout win over Vic Darchinyan, who currently resides in THE RING's P-4-P top 10, and he's kept on getting better in the 21 months since. He looked untouchable against Luis Maldonado in his first alphabet title defense. He exceeded all expectations against previously unbeaten **Raul Martinez** in his most recent defense. (And, wow, what a beautiful left uppercut.) "The Filipino Flash" is 26, just coming into his prime, and a true joy to watch. If not for an 11-month gap of inactivity in 2008, he'd probably be on everybody's P-4-P list right now.

Beneath Donaire at 112 pounds is a perfectly solid crew of capable, experienced fighters, but nobody who's better than about a 3-1 underdog against Donaire. Naito looks like a vulnerable titlist at 34, having needed to come from behind to stop unknown **Tomonobu Shimizu** last July. The 31-year-old Pongsaklek might end up getting a fifth fight against Naito—yes, you read that correctly—but his best days are certainly in the past. Denkaosaen is quite possibly the greatest threat to Donaire, having iced **Takefumi Sakata** in two rounds to win a title, but he's in his 30s also. And Narvaez feels at times like the Zsolt Erdei of the flyweight division—skilled and capable, but totally uninterested in unifying belts.

If there's a big fight out there for one of these titlists (other than facing each other), it's probably in Japan against **Koki Kameda**. Kameda is a controversial trash talker and the biggest

FLYWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Nonito Donaire

BEST BOXER
Nonito Donaire

MOST PROTECTED
Panomroonglek Kratingdaenggym

MOST AVOIDED
Zolani Tete

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Hussein Hussein

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Nonito Donaire-Brian Viloria

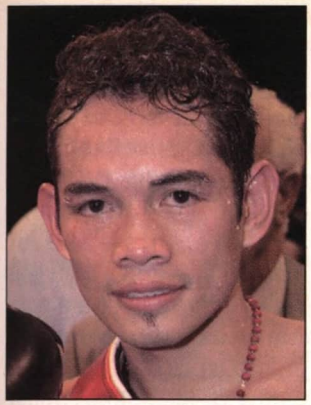
DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Nonito Donaire

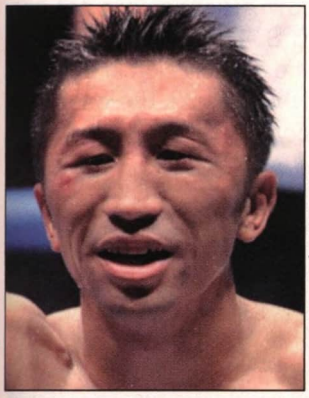
ON THE WAY UP
Cesar Seda Jr.

ON THE WAY DOWN
Jose Antonio Aguirre

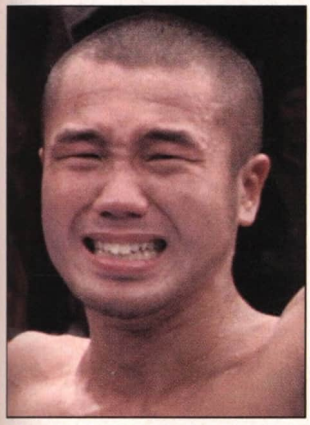
BEST FIGHT IN 2008
Daisuke Naito KO 10 Tomonobu Shimizu



Nonito Donaire



Daisuke Naito



Takefumi Sakata

name in Japanese boxing, even though the 22-year-old former 108-pound beltholder still has quite a bit to prove in the ring.

Think About It: We'd like to make a request to the people putting out Narvaez' press releases, to the people at Fightnews.com who regurgitate every press release they receive and slap an exclamation point at the end of every headline, and to anyone else who has ever referenced Narvaez breaking Carlos Monzon's record for title defenses by an Argentine: Please stop. This is like a college baseball player hitting safely in 57 consecutive games and claiming to have broken Joe DiMaggio's record. Narvaez is a quality fighter and all, but can you really compare defending the legitimate, undisputed middleweight title against all comers with defending the un-unified WBO flyweight trinket against handpicked opponents? When Narvaez captures the unified 112-pound title, let us know and we'll begin tracking his pursuit of Monzon, since at that point he'll be 14 defenses away from catching the legendary Hall of Famer.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT

We wouldn't necessarily call it "the right hand heard 'round the world" or anything. But the punch with which **Brian Viloria** knocked out **Ulises Solis** in April was at least the right hand heard 'round the junior flyweight division. It was a punch that completely changed the outlook of this weight class and actually created something that didn't exist previously: a marketable fight at the top of the division.

Bear in mind, when we say "marketable," we don't mean it would sell half a million pay-per-views or pack the Staples Center or anything. But if a match between Viloria and RING champion **Ivan Calderon** could be made, it would be the closest thing this division has seen to a superfight since the Michael Carbajal-Chiquita Gonzalez days. You have two members of the 2000 Olympic class, you have an undefeated champion, you have a challenger who's been on U.S. TV semi-regularly since his pro debut eight years ago, and you have a classic boxer vs. puncher clash. We're not talking seven-figure paydays or anything. But we're talking about a fight that matters to hardcore fans, and when it comes to 108-pounders, that's about as much as you can ask for.

Because of Calderon's defense-first style, however, the fight might turn out to be a dud. That's something you never have to worry about with **Giovanni Segura**, a pure puncher without a hint of finesse who lost his alphabet belt in an entertaining scrap against **Cesar Canchila** last July, then regained it in March with an explosive fourth-round TKO. If Calderon-Viloria doesn't happen, Viloria-Segura would certainly be an entertaining alternative.

The rest of the division is mostly stocked with veterans. Leading the way is alphabet titlist **Edgar Sosa**, who has distinguished himself with consistent performances and a busy schedule (eight defenses in two years). Experienced fighters like Filipino **Juanito Rubillar**, Mexican **Omar Nino**, and Puerto Rican **Nelson Dieppa** are all still hanging around, and, of course, Solis might still be a factor if he can bounce back from that right hand heard 'round this division.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Giovanni Segura

BEST BOXER
Ivan Calderon
Jose Sanchez

MOST AVOIDED
Munetsugu Kayo

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Luis Lazarte

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Ivan Calderon-Brian Viloria

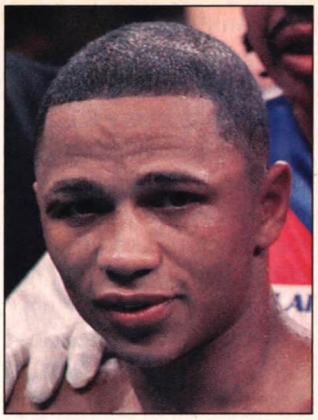
DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Edgar Sosa

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Giovanni Segura

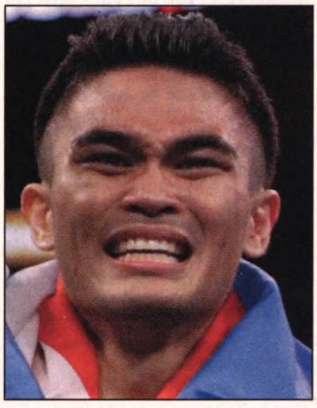
ON THE WAY UP
Luis Alberto Rios

ON THE WAY DOWN
Eriberto Gejon

BEST FIGHT IN 2008
Cesar Canchila W 12
Giovanni Segura



Ivan Calderon



Brian Viloria

Think About It: Want a statistical oddity? In a sport in which we see a draw about once every 30 or 40 fights, junior fly **Muvhuso Nedzanani** of South Africa began his career 0-1-3. It looked more like an early-season hockey record than a boxing record. For what it's worth, Nedzanani has since gone on to win 21 straight fights, bringing his record to a less-peculiar looking 21-1-3 (12).

STRAWWEIGHT

Last year in this space, we tried to get excited about a new titlist, **Florante Condes**, just because of his nickname, "Little Pacquiao." This year, we don't have to *try* to get excited about a new titlist. We flat-out *are* excited. In a division that hasn't seen a major bout aired on HBO, Showtime, ESPN, Versus, or any other non-pay-per-view, non-Spanish-language TV outlet since Ricardo Lopez moved up in weight more than a decade ago, **Roman "Chocolate" Gonzalez** has the truly depraved, hardcore, YouTube-watching fans ready to care again.

If you hunted down footage of his four-round destruction of **Yutaka Niida** last September, which ended the longest alphabet title reign in the sport, you know what we're talking about. Gonzalez is dynamic. He's hard-punching. He's only 21 years old. The Nicaraguan did struggle in his first defense, a majority decision over anonymous **Francisco Rosas** in February, so we're going to rein in the excitement ever so slightly. But the fact is that Gonzalez feels, for now, like the first reason for American TV to acknowledge the 105-pounders since Lopez said adios.

And frankly, for the depraved and hardcore among us who keep an eye on the strawweight division—yes, all 28 of us—there's more to this division than just Gonzalez. Mexico's **Raul "Rayito" Garcia** is 26 years old, undefeated, and beat Condes in a close fight in June '08 to claim a belt. And the third major alphabet titlist, 23-year-old **Oleydong Sithsamerchai** of Thailand, is also unbeaten and a skillful southpaw boxer.

Then there's Condes, who obviously isn't the second coming of Pacquiao but is still a solid scrapper, as well as fellow Filipinos **Donnie Nietes** and **Milan Melindo**. And one more intriguing young fighter is **Nkosinathi Joyi** of South Africa, who boasts a record of 19-0 (15) and is due to face Condes in June.

It's a new era at strawweight—the Lopez era is long gone, and the Niida-Ivan Calderon era, which saw too many retreads in title fights, is over as well. We'll see if the likes of Gonzalez and Garcia can live up to expectations, but if they do, this could be a damned good era at 105 pounds.

Think About It: Strawweight is not a division packed with American talent. That isn't exactly a shocking newsflash. But we examined BoxRec.com's entire list of active strawweights—292 of them in all—and would you believe there isn't a single American strawweight in the sport? There are plenty of Mexicans, South Americans, Asians, and a few Africans, but not one U.S.-born fighter. This is the only division in the sport where that's the case, according to BoxRec.com. ■

STRAWWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Roman Gonzalez

BEST BOXER
Raul Garcia

MOST PROTECTED
Kwanthai Chor
Nor Pattalung

MOST AVOIDED
Juan Palacios

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Daniel Reyes

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Roman Gonzalez-
Raul Garcia

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Florante Condes

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Roman Gonzalez

ON THE WAY UP
Milan Melindo

ON THE WAY DOWN
Ronald Barrera

BEST FIGHT IN 2008
Raul Garcia W 12
Florante Condes

PHOTO BY JUAN CARLOS REYES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Roman Gonzalez is making fans notice strawweights

BACK ISSUES OF KO

Back issues of several editions of *KO Magazine*, the acknowledged leader in boxing journalism, are still available in limited quantity. Since its inception in 1980, *KO* has become known for its quality stories and columns and peak-action photographs. Don't delay. Supplies are running out!

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June 1998: Lewis vs. Holyfield: Why The Fight Of The Year Isn't Going To Happen. Color Pinup: Evander Holyfield. Interview: Eddie Futch. Also: Hector Lizarraga, pain, Head-To-Head review.

Aug. 1998: Lewis Bombs Out Briggs: Would The WBC Champ Do This To Holyfield? Color Pinup: Keith Mullings. Interview: Shane Mosley. Also: Pernell Whitaker, Marco Antonio Barrera, Roberto Garcia.

Sept. 1998: Can Mike Tyson Make A Successful Comeback? Sugar Ray Leonard Has The Answer. Color Pinup: Michael Grant. Interview: Brad Jacobs. Also: Naseem Hamed, Wayne McCullough, Kirk Johnson.

Oct. 1998: The Ultimate Fantasy Card. Color Pinup: Oscar De La Hoya. Interview: Roy Jones. Also: Brendan Ingle, NYPD boxing, prospect blueprint.

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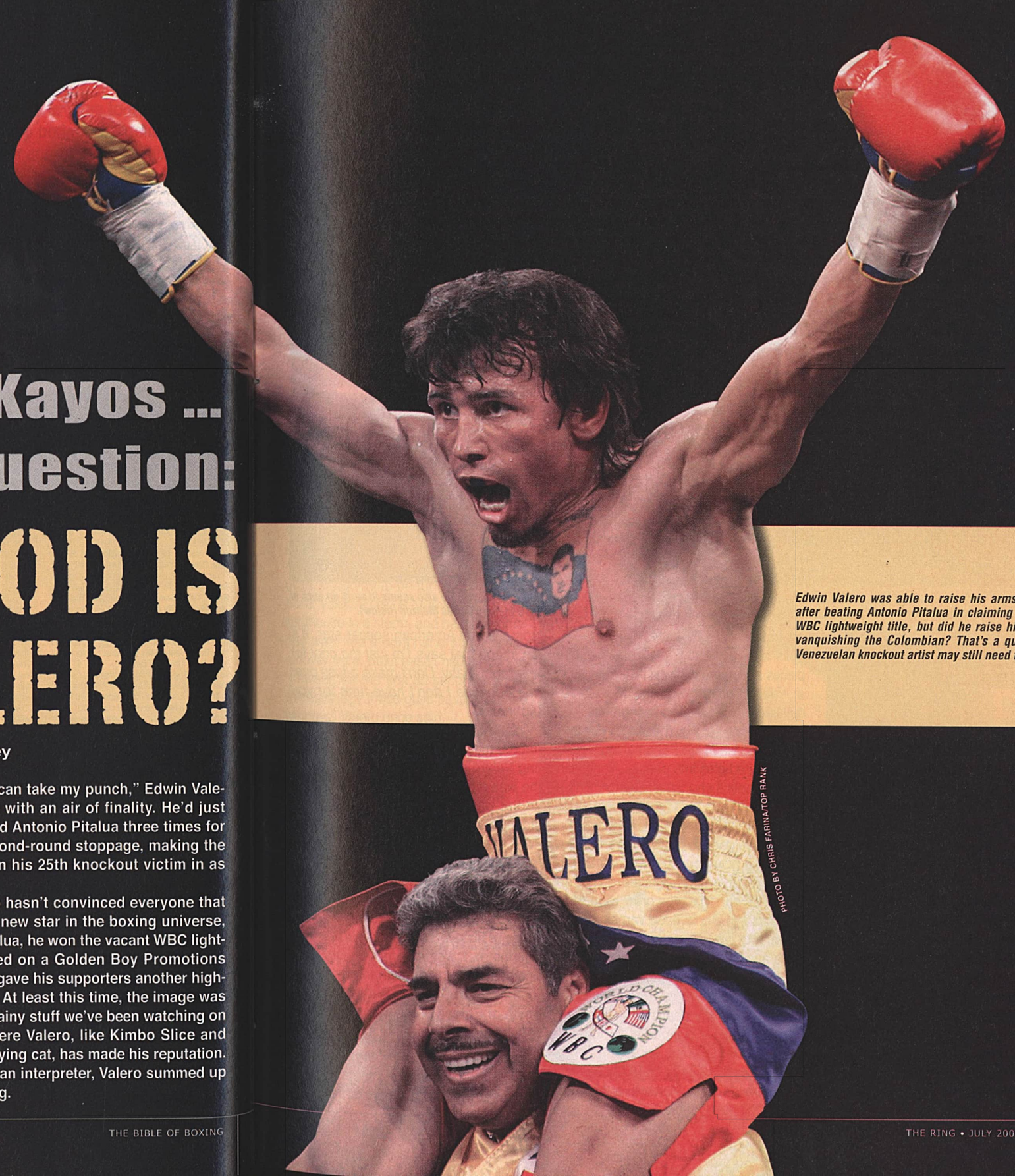
25 Straight Kayos ... And Still The Question:

HOW GOOD IS EDWIN VALERO?

By Don Stradley

"No man can take my punch," Edwin Valero said with an air of finality. He'd just dropped Antonio Pitalua three times for an impressive second-round stoppage, making the Colombian veteran his 25th knockout victim in as many fights.

Granted, Valero hasn't convinced everyone that he's the brightest new star in the boxing universe, but by beating Pitalua, he won the vacant WBC lightweight title, starred on a Golden Boy Promotions pay-per-view, and gave his supporters another highlight reel moment. At least this time, the image was clearer than the grainy stuff we've been watching on YouTube.com, where Valero, like Kimbo Slice and Nora the piano-playing cat, has made his reputation. Speaking through an interpreter, Valero summed up Pitalua with a shrug.



Edwin Valero was able to raise his arms in victory after beating Antonio Pitalua in claiming the vacant WBC lightweight title, but did he raise his status in vanquishing the Colombian? That's a question the Venezuelan knockout artist may still need to answer.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

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PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

There's no doubt Valero looks the part of a star inside the ring, with his impressive physique and devastating power (above). He also seems to carry an aura of star quality outside the ring as well, with his long hair and tinted sunglasses, walking with the hip demeanor of a modern Carlos Monzon (below).

"Honestly, I expected more from him," Valero said. "I thought we would go into the fifth or sixth round and I would have to break him down little by little. I felt I hurt him in the first with a jab, then I broke his soul."

If boxing needed a lightweight destroyer, the Venezuelan southpaw certainly looks the part. Even when he's hitting the speedbag, he has a sinister look in his eyes, as if he wants to break that bag into pieces and mail it home to its manufacturer. Valero, sometimes called "El Inca" because of his Inca Indian background, has the same cold-blooded look that Roberto Duran had when the Panamanian legend could stare holes into people. Along with his assassin's charisma, Valero owns a physique that is built for the sport, wide across the back and shoulders, as if the grand designer in the cosmos felt like building a powerpuncher the day Valero was conceived. When Valero has an opponent hurt, his orbs grow wide, until he looks like a wild-eyed vampire come down from the mountains to claim a new bride and terrorize the villagers.

The look Valero has outside the ring could be described as retro-cool, complete with scruffy beard, long hair, and tinted glasses. He's partial to fingertip length leather jackets, and seems to be channeling the visage of 1970s middleweight king Carlos Monzon, or perhaps some South American soccer star. It's an image that says *I'm just too cool for the room, baby. Don't make a fuss over me because I don't have time for you right now.*

Aside from his many moods and faces, most of the mystique surrounding Valero stems from the years when he was effectively banned from fighting in the United States. Denied a boxing license after a much-publicized 2004 MRI exam in New York detected an irregularity—a result of a 2001 motorcycle accident that fractured his skull—Valero worked in Japan and Panama and Mexico, wherever he could get fights. Clips of his overseas bouts surfaced on the Internet, where hardcore fight junkies scrutinized his rough interpretation of the Sweet Science. But even as the myth of El Inca grew, many wondered if he'd ever be more than a gypsy boxer with no home.

Thanks to Texas, which granted Valero a boxing license in 2008, he's state-

side again. Valero's bout with Pitalua, which took place at the Frank Erwin Center at the University of Texas in Austin, was his first bout on American soil since December 18, 2003, when he smeared Tomas Zambrano in one round at a Marriott Hotel in Irvine, California.

Valero is now promoted by Top Rank, the firm that also handles Manny Pacquiao and Miguel Cotto. In Valero, Top Rank's Bob Arum may have the third part of an international boxing triumvirate. But not even the optimistic Arum can douse the ongoing skepticism surrounding Valero. Everything from Valero's wide-open stance, to the scarcity of quality opponents on his record, causes many fans to wonder if Valero is just another overhyped import. Some of the questions raised are reasonable. For instance ...

Can Valero survive on aggression alone?

Fighters with only one gear are eventually exposed, usually by some slick boxer who happens also to have a sturdy jaw. But even if Valero turns out to be the most overrated pug since Ricardo Mayorga, it's going to be fun watching him. Sure, Valero's chin is as inviting as a lone lighthouse in a storm, and he may someday walk into a right hand that he can't recover from. But it hasn't happened yet. "I swear, for the first 30 seconds, whatever strategy those guys have is out the window," Valero once said.

Can Robert Alcazar really make a difference?

The addition of trainer Alcazar to Valero's camp created some pre-fight buzz. Alcazar guided Oscar De La Hoya early on, and some wonder if Alcazar can smooth out Valero's rough edges. But you can't turn a pit bull into a reindeer. A fighter eventually resorts to whatever is in his DNA. In Valero's case, he may always attack opponents as if he's wielding a tomahawk in each hand.

What impact can Valero have on the deep lightweight class?

The 135-pound class features one legitimately great fighter—champion Juan Manual Marquez—and a solid lineup behind him that includes Breidis Prescott,

KNOCKOUT STREAKS

Edwin Valero's calling card may be his 25-fight knockout streak, but many fighters have started careers with even more impressive kayo runs.

Rodolfo Gonzalez, WBC lightweight boss from 1972-74, began his career with 35 consecutive knockouts. Others who ran up impressive knockout streaks include Jose Manuel Urtain (30), Acelino Freitas (29), Alfonso Zamora (29), Vitali Klitschko (27), and John "The Beast" Mugabi (26), and Mac Foster (24). Some of history's hardest bangers, such as Rocky Marciano (16), and Mike Tyson (18), began their careers with more modest streaks.

Fighters who didn't begin their careers with a knockout but later put together amazing streaks, would include 1960s heavyweight Lamar Clark, who holds the all-time record with 44 in a row (some records say 43). There was also Wilfredo Gomez (32), Jimmy Adamick (32), Jesus Pimentel (28), Carlos Zarate (28), Henry Armstrong (27), Dario Azuaga (27), Earnie Shavers (27), Miguel Julio (27), and Julian Jackson (24).

As you can see, the list includes some legitimately great fighters, and a handful of not-so-greats. As impressive as knockout streaks appear on paper, they can be accomplished through careful matchmaking. For instance, 1990s heavyweight Don Steel rang up about 40 in a row against some of the worst opposition available. And 1940s light heavyweight contender Billy Fox stopped 36 consecutive opponents, but one of Fox's "victims" was Jake LaMotta, who later testified before the Kefauver Committee that he'd thrown the fight in order to receive a title shot. It's reasonable to speculate that other opponents could have obliged Fox with similar favors.

Ultimately, Valero's greatness won't be measured by his kayo streak, but rather how he performs against great fighters.

—D.S.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Acelino Freitas started his career off with an impressive run of 29 straight knockout wins against dubious foes like Juan Carlos Ramirez. But "Popo's" power went puff when it came to better opposition.

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Can Valero's aggressive style be enough to propel him to even greater heights? He's looked exciting against of Pitalua, who was dropped three times in two rounds by "El Inca," but he has yet to be truly tested.

Anthony Peterson, Vicente Escobedo, and Rolando Reyes. There are also some quality lightweights coming off losses, including Joel Casamayor, and three fellows named Diaz. For shear action, the best opponent for Valero could be Aussie brawler Michael Katsidis, who revived his career by stopping Jesus Chavez on the Valero-Pitalua undercard.

But don't count on Valero facing more than one or two of these fighters. He wants marquee fights and big paydays, not Ali Funeka.

The most likely opponents for Valero at this point might be Juan Diaz or Casamayor. The reason: They fight for Golden Boy Promotions, and if a Marquez-Valero bout is being considered, GBP might be willing to sacrifice soft-punching Juan Diaz and aging Casamayor just to keep Valero's profile high. They could even throw in Jorge Barrios, who is always entertaining but tends to lose the big ones. The closest the rest of the lightweights will get to Valero is watching him on YouTube.

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Valero has turned to trainer Robert Alcazar, who at one time worked with Oscar De La Hoya. Can Alcazar introduce Valero to defense and iron out some of his high-risk tendencies?

Is Valero ready for Marquez?

No. Even Valero's staunchest admirers admit he needs more seasoning. On the other hand, Valero is never going to be Willie Pep, so maybe Top Rank is correct to push for Marquez now. Why wait? Marquez could very well be retired by the time Valero is "ready."

In some ways, Valero reminds us of Pacquiao in his early days. The slight difference is that Valero may have a better right hand than Pacquiao had back then. If you recall, very few thought Pacquiao could beat Marco Antonio Barrera when they first met. Too wild, the critics said, too one dimensional, just as they're saying about Valero now.

Does a win over Pitalua mean much?

Although GBP hyped Pitalua as a legitimate threat, he was 39 years old, had fought outside of Mexico only once, and his record of 40 knockouts in 45 fights seemed sketchy. Pitalua's key win was a recent knockout of Jose Armando Santa Cruz, a fighter best known for a disputed points loss to Casamayor. The win earned Pitalua a number-five spot in THE RING's lightweight ratings, but prior to fighting Santa Cruz, Pitalua was avoiding the tough neighborhoods. Pitalua's four opponents during 2006-07 combined for a record of 0-8. His opponents in 2003 combined for a record of 40-30-2.

Granted, Valero has some padding on his record too. No one goes 25-0 (25) without a few free lunches. But since 2006, Valero has been fighting opponents with solid, winning records, including Vicente Mosquera for the WBA super featherweight title. The best we can say about Pitalua is that he was a strong, legitimate lightweight, a reasonable test for former 130-pounder Valero. No, beating Pitalua doesn't mean much, but it was a nice way for Valero to introduce himself to American fans.

Sporting a new tattoo of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez on his chest, Valero dominated the first round, pumping Pitalua with his right jab and occasionally throwing combinations. Although Pitalua, 135, was listed as an inch taller at 5'7", Valero seemed much more physically imposing. Valero, 134½, began punctuating his jabs by hissing through his mouthpiece, which must have made Pitalua feel as if he was in the ring with a giant snake. Pitalua seemed unsure of himself, but late in the round he tried his

luck with a right hook to Valero's neck; Valero absorbed the shot and kept coming forward.

Early in the second, Valero landed a short right that dropped Pitalua and more or less ended the fight. Pitalua beat the count, but looked unsteady. Valero leaped in and flailed away like an overheated Golden Glover, decking Pitalua a second time. Pitalua rose, was waved back into action by referee Laurence Cole, but absorbed another barrage until Cole stepped in at 0:49. Pitalua fell a third time as the fight was being stopped.

"If Juan Manuel Marquez wants to fight Manny Pacquiao again, fight [Valero] first," said Arum. "If Marquez wants, we'll fight him in Mexico—any city in Mexico. I believe in Edwin Valero. What you have seen tonight is something really special, something out of the ordinary. You've seen the emergence of a star with superpowers in both hands, someone who can handle any lightweight in the world."

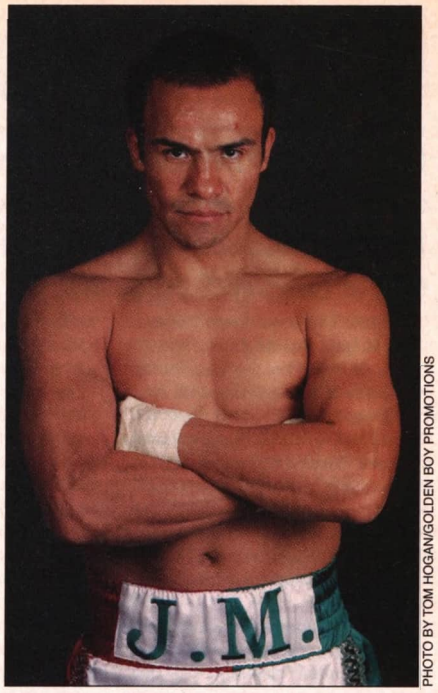
GBP's Richard Schaefer, however, believes Marquez should fight Pacquiao first. "There is unfinished business there. If Marquez is ready, and should Pacquiao win against Ricky Hatton, Juan Manuel Marquez should get an opportunity at the winner. Then we'd love to fight Edwin Valero. He needs more exposure here first," Schaefer said.

"If the opportunity arises to fight either, I would like Marquez," said Valero. "He is very technical and a warrior in the ring, and I would like to discuss making this happen. But there's that so-called 'monster' from the Philippines I want a shot at. I am ready to fight anyone."

Valero, who makes his home in Las Vegas, versus either Marquez or Pacquiao could be a Sin City blockbuster. Perhaps in the time it takes to make those fights, Nevada will see fit to lift Valero's suspension. Nevada Athletic Commission Executive Director Keith Kizer feels it could happen soon.

"I would think he has a good chance to be licensed here," said Kizer. "Texas passed him, and that's a good sign. Also in his favor is that he's been performing well in the ring. But there's nothing on the agenda yet." All that's needed is for three members of a five person medical board to clear Valero after examining his case.

Some doctors have described Valero's injury as minor; others say that boxing with even a minor brain injury is hazardous. Prior to fighting Pitalua, Valero addressed the issue during a conference call. "Every fighter that steps in the ring runs a risk of being injured or being hurt. And I am at no more risk that any other fighter."



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Valero would like to meet Juan Manuel Marquez, but those who've watched him progress may have some doubts as to whether or he is ready to face THE RING's lightweight world champion just yet. Valero, they say, is too one-dimensional for someone as well-rounded as Marquez.

Last summer Arum announced that he was gathering Valero's medical records with the intention of sending them to Nevada, where Arum hoped to stage a Valero-Pacquiao bout. It never happened; Pacquiao fought De La Hoya instead. Kizer told THE RING that he's yet to receive anything regarding Valero, "but it wouldn't surprise me if a package arrived soon."

Whether Edwin Valero's career plays out in Texas or Las Vegas doesn't matter. For many years, Valero's work was limited to Southern California boxing gyms, where a kind of folklore existed about this vagabond fighter who bested everyone in sparring sessions, and frightened observers with his machine-like punching. He was a question mark, a subject for debate, a phantom. What's important now is that Valero is finally leaving the arena of myth and entering the arena of reality. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Valero made easy work of Pitalua, forcing referee Laurence Cole to intervene at the 0:49 mark of the second round. Valero's emphatic victory had Bob Arum proclaiming his fighter would be willing to fight Marquez anytime, anywhere, including Mexico. "I believe in Edwin Valero," Top Rank's chairman said.

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A CUT ABOVE

Barrera's Bravery Deepens Guerrero's Wound

By William Dettloff

By the weekend of March 14, Robert Guerrero had to figure the worst of it was over. The attention span of the average American male being what it is, fallout over his no-contest against Duad Yordan the week before had to be fading.

The sadist and bloodthirsty among us had taken their shots at him, called him what they would, and you need no extra description here. Use your imagination. Now, a week later, surely they all would be back at their little lives and the never-ending search for the next silly issue that would send them scrambling for their keyboards.

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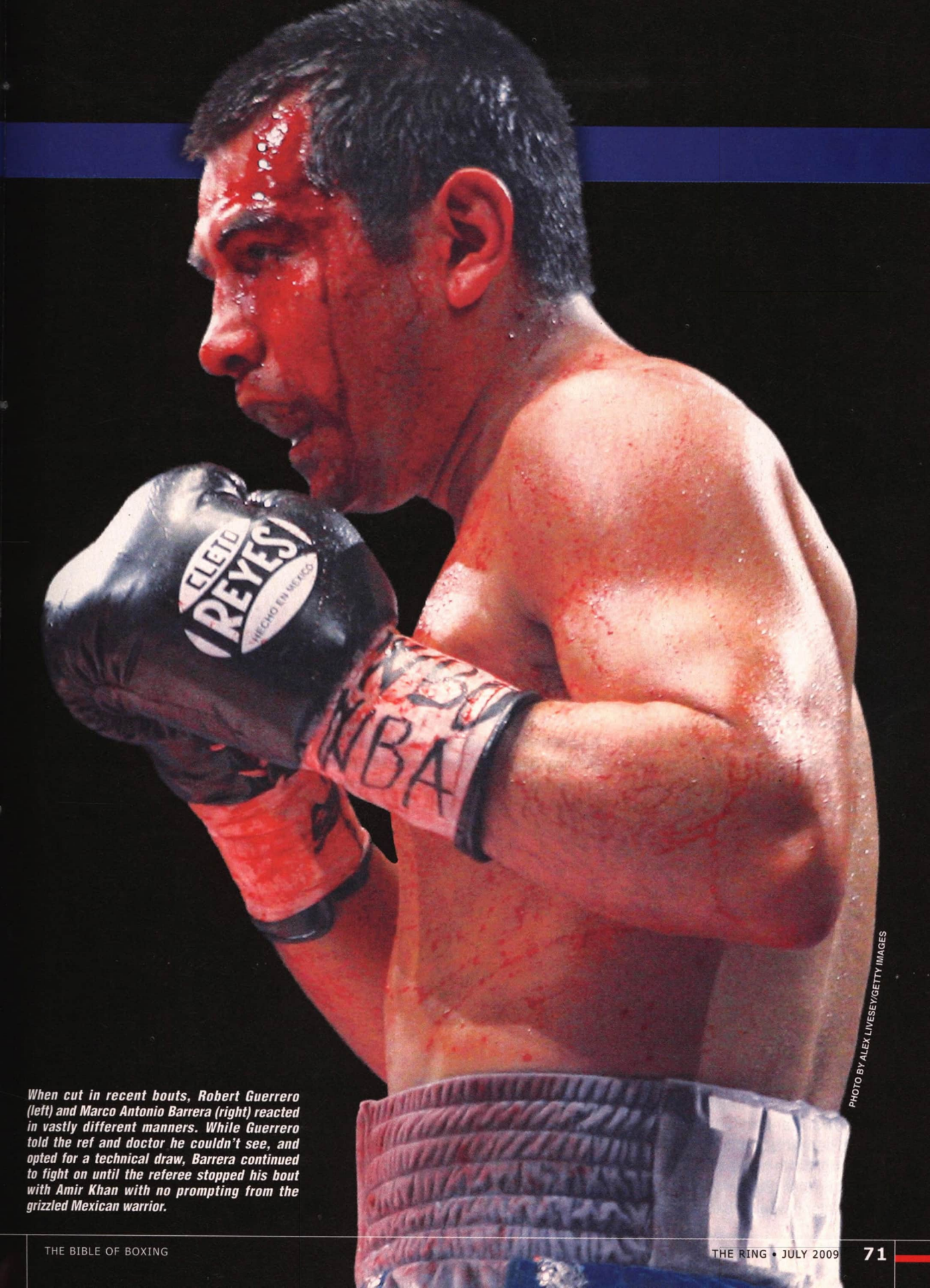
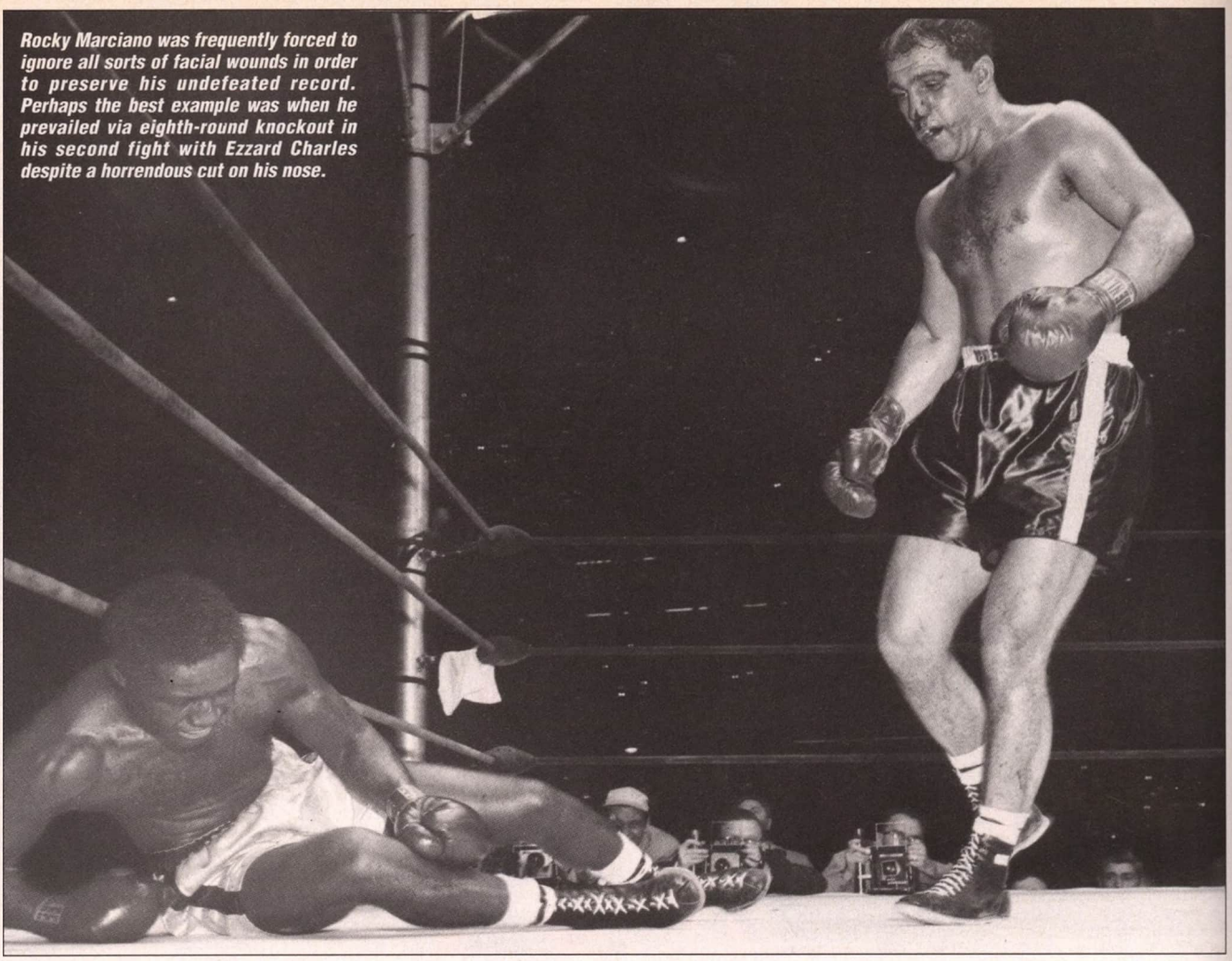


PHOTO BY ALEX LIVESEY/GETTY IMAGES

When cut in recent bouts, Robert Guerrero (left) and Marco Antonio Barrera (right) reacted in vastly different manners. While Guerrero told the ref and doctor he couldn't see, and opted for a technical draw, Barrera continued to fight on until the referee stopped his bout with Amir Khan with no prompting from the grizzled Mexican warrior.



Rocky Marciano was frequently forced to ignore all sorts of facial wounds in order to preserve his undefeated record. Perhaps the best example was when he prevailed via eighth-round knockout in his second fight with Ezzard Charles despite a horrendous cut on his nose.

Surely some new soap opera would emerge to send them diving joyfully into the barely literate and comically profane Internet forums and message boards from whence they had come, and Guerrero would get some peace again and some quiet time to think about what the hell he had done to his career.

It wasn't the end of the world. So he had sought the comfort of referee Jon Schorle after a second-round headbutt ripped open a canyon over his right eye. Big deal. Other fighters had done the same or worse. So what that when the doctor asked him if he could see he said "no." What was he supposed to say?

Sure, he could have waited until the end of the round and had his corner have a go at it. And true, most of the 7,000 or so fans at The Tank were there to see him, and this was only his second fight with his new promoter and on HBO no less. But it would blow over. A week later it would be forgotten.

Then Marco Antonio Barrera fought four rounds with a red curtain pulled over his face that turned out to be plasma spewing from a cut at his hairline, courtesy of a headbutt from Amir Khan. And Guerrero's nightmare began anew.

The events came too close to one another, the parallels were too obvious, the fighters' reactions too dissimilar. When the bleeding started, Barrera seemed to lose heart a bit, but didn't run to the referee complaining he couldn't see. And when the round ended, he went to his corner, sat down and let his boys go to work with their potions and creams. When the bell rang, he got up and fought some more. Then he sat down again. Then got up. And so on.

He lost in the end and might even have without the cut, but no one accused him of punking out. He came into the ring with the reputation of a warrior, and it's how he left.

September 17, 1954

Heavyweight champion of the world Rocky Marciano defends the crown for the second time against former champion Ezzard Charles. A large crowd at Yankee Stadium watches as Marciano starts quickly, flooring Charles in the second round. At the end of the sixth, though, Charles slices open his nose, either with an elbow or a pair of hooks, depending on whom you ask. The cut runs vertically, deep and long, nearly separating Marciano's nose down the middle. In the next round, Charles opens up Marciano's left eye. Marciano's corner fears referee Al Berl is on the verge of stopping it and tells Rocky to end things. Marciano does as he is told, stopping Charles in the eighth with a series of clubbing right hands.

So everyone went back at Guerrero again. But was it fair?

"The difference between Barrera and Guerrero is Barrera is at the end of his career and doesn't have a future to protect; Guerrero does," HBO's Max Kellerman told THE RING. Kellerman called the Guerrero-Yordan fight from ringside, as well as James Kirkland's win over Joel Julio in the main event.

"And there are other factors to consider. Say he can't fight again because the cut is too bad, or now he's going to get cut in every fight. Guerrero may have been thinking, *I have a family to support. This guy is going to be tough to beat, tougher than I thought. I'm injured and I have a family to support.* He may have made that business decision."

Prizefighters and those who make their livings around them weigh the pros and cons of that kind of decision all the time and have been doing so for as long as the sport has existed. In other games of chance and skill, even very physically challenging ones, there are few questions or controversies that can surround the timing and circumstance of a contest's conclusion when spurting blood is involved. In fact, by the time an announcer gets those two words—"spurting" and "blood" out of his mouth, there's already an ambulance on the way.

A splotch of the red stuff suddenly appearing on an athlete's person, in, say, baseball or basketball, for example, results in immediate medical attention to include but not limited to numbing, suturing, dressing, administration of a tetanus shot, then a lollipop. If the patient is especially well behaved, a snow cone or Italian ice, a motherly kiss, or some other such frosty treat rounds out the evening.

Ballplayers are not fighters. In those other sports, boo-boos are serious business. And a cut as long as Guerrero's was—it took 23 stitches to close—would bring entire teams together for a midfield or midcourt prayer session designed to improve the patient's chance of survival. Have we mentioned that ballplayers, to include baseball, basketball and tennis players, golfers, bowlers, billiards champions, and croquet masters, inhabit a universe unconnected in every way to the one in which fighters live?

May 25, 1972

At the start of the fourth round of his challenge of world heavyweight champion Joe Frazier, Ron Stander, an Iowan butcher, waves Frazier toward him. He is bleeding from four cuts: one on his right eyelid, one below his right eye, and one each at the beginning of each eyebrow. Frazier, nice and warmed up and no longer cautious from the effects of a right hand that surprised him in the first round, obliges Stander and tees off. "The Council Bluffs Butcher," as Stander is called, is not discouraged by the malice in Frazier's fists; he's already taken 60 stitches in his face over 25 fights and the 32 more he was to receive afterward are of no consequence to him. He expresses a measure of displeasure when Dr. Jack Lewis forbids him to continue after the fourth.

Ron Stander gets a consoling kiss from his wife following a brutal beating at the hands of Joe Frazier in 1972. Even though his face was badly cut in four places, Stander was displeased when the doctor stopped the fight.

Surely the sense exists in the fight game, mainly among the pragmatists and the reluctant pacifists, that it's not only okay, but also preferable for a fighter to bail out if afforded the chance when the alternative is a loss. Get out alive today and look good next time, and all that.

But there are losses and there are losses. A technical decision win can be a loss, and a loss in a good hard fight can be a win. Have we learned nothing from Arturo Gatti?

"It's hard to get in any fighter's head and know what they're thinking, and I know Guerrero is a tough, tough kid," said manager Cameron Dunkin. "But it's better to go out on your shield than it is to quit. That can really hurt your career. Because of [the rise of] mixed martial arts we've come a long way over the last couple of years in that you can actually lose a fight and it's not the end of your career."

Promoter Lou DiBella agrees. "If you lose really, well there's no disgrace. If you fight through the blood in a real blood-and-guts fight and lose, it really doesn't hurt you that much."

That may be true, but it's hardly a universal belief, or at least it's too risky to be embraced in the heat of a fight, especially by those inclined toward pragmatism. Pragmatists and capitalists often run in the same crowds after all, and if the fight game seems to have far more of the latter than the former, it's only because the pragmatists are always hidden away in the corner, pounding out million-dollar deals on their iPhones and Blackberrys.

Invisible or not, they know the name of the game is protecting your asset, and if that means violating the fighter's code of not appearing indifferent to severe injury and trying to wrangle a win out of a sure loss, or at least something less damaging than an official loss, then so be it.

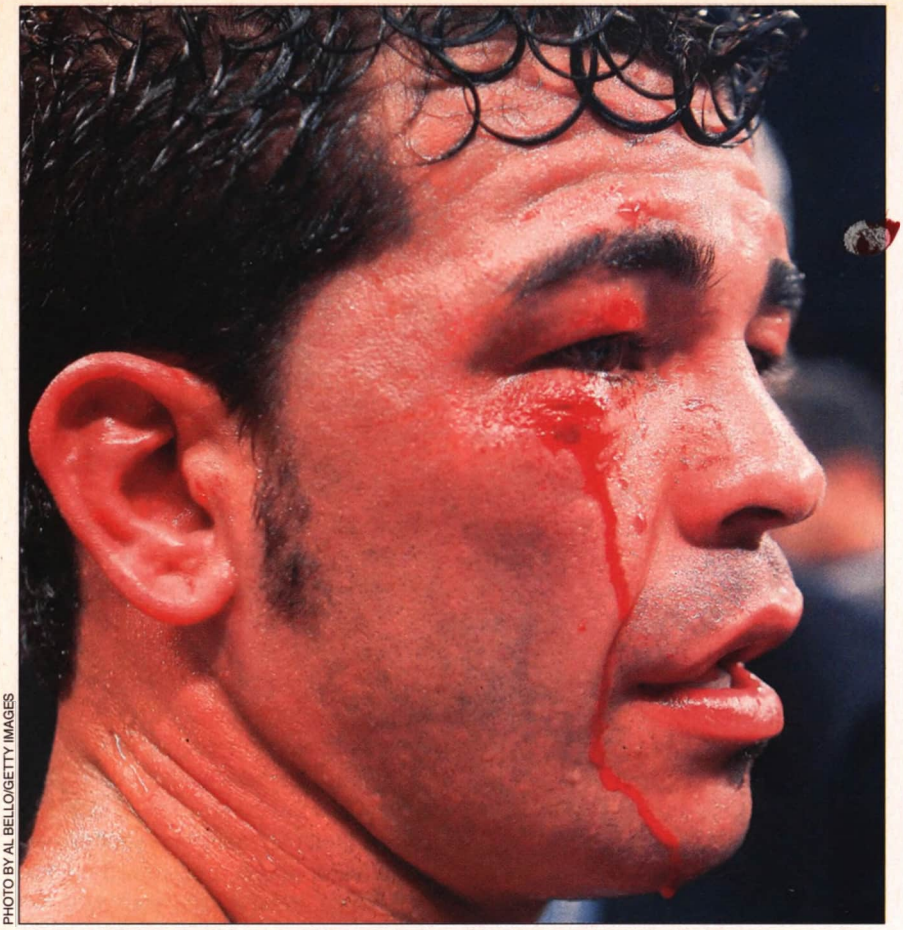


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Arturo Gatti was famous for battling through the blood, and even when he lost, it didn't hurt his box-office appeal. In fact, it was his ability to give everything he had regardless of the circumstances that made Gatti a star.

Joe Jacobs and Max Schmeling weren't the first to try to squeeze a disqualification win out of a coming defeat. They did it long before Luis Santana (twice!) turned Terry Norris' anger against him. And as the rules governing the handling of cuts evolved, especially cuts caused by headbutts, the game's pragmatists, in the ring and out, learned how to use those rules to their advantage. Sometimes those pragmatists collide with the purists. Other times they are the purists.

Veteran promoter Dan Goossen suffered no obvious attacks of conscience in 2001 when his fighter, Hector Camacho Jr., told the referee he couldn't see anymore right around the time Jesse James Leija started belting him around the ring. Camacho had been cut a couple of rounds earlier. The fight was stopped and Camacho was awarded a technical decision win, which was later overturned and ruled a no-contest.

"I stick up for my fighters, but in that case not really," Goossen told THE RING. "I didn't fight it (when the result was changed to a no-decision), because I can't fight for something I don't believe is fair. It wasn't fair to James Leija to have a loss in that fight.

"The way I was brought up in the boxing business is that wild horses could not drag a fighter out of the ring who was worth his weight in salt. The way we prevent unfortunate circumstances is to have doctors who are trained on when to stop a fight," Goossen said.

"The real good fighters will do everything in their power not to have the doctor or referee stop the fight. I'm not here to tell a fighter to fight if he's got a nasty cut or some other injury. All I know is that the fighters we've idolized through the years are the ones who fight through what's in their path."

March 22, 1997

Genaro Hernandez challenges the profoundly respected Azumah Nelson at the Memorial Coliseum in Corpus Christi, Texas, for Nelson's long-held WBC super featherweight title. Nelson, though still formidable, is past his best days and vulnerable against a slick fighter like Hernandez. "Chicanito" outboxes him and is ahead on points when Nelson accidentally hits him in the throat after the bell ending the seventh round. Hernandez takes several minutes to recover and is told that if he cannot continue he will win by disqualification. He decides to continue fighting and goes on to win the bout, and the title, by split decision.

"Real fighters understand that fighting with an injury is part of the game," said DiBella. "Paulie [Malignaggi] didn't do well against Ricky Hatton, but I'll tell you what: He fought most of his early fights with a broken right hand. That's what fighters do. Hernandez could have gotten out against Nelson, but he made a warrior's decision. That's what real fighters do. Arturo Gatti has been legally blind, where one eye was swollen shut and the other had blood going into it, and you never saw him punk out."

True, but there is punking out and then there is punking out, suggests Dr. Margaret Goodman, fellow RING scribe, neurologist, and former chairman of the Medical Advisory Board of the Nevada State Athletic Commission.

Asked if she ever stopped a bout in which the fighter was capable of continuing but sent signals that he'd had enough, she replied, "Yes, many times, but the ring doctor and the referee have to be very careful. If the fighter wants to stop and the cut isn't severe, then it has to be the fighter stopping.

"There were occasions with young fighters who couldn't handle a fight, when I would stop it, but use the cut as the excuse. Many times when a fight stops on a cut it is because the fighter has absorbed enough punishment and the cut makes it easier to sell to the public."

Some fighters can't get going until they're bleeding. Henry Cooper comes to mind. And Vito Antuofermo. Gene Fullmer was always bleeding. And Bobby Chacon and Matthew Saad Muhammad. Carmen Basilio, too, and Stevie Johnston, and Alex Stewart. And Vinny Pazienza.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Lightweight contender Juan Diaz has only lost two pro fights, and in both he suffered an eye cut. Some observers believe that Diaz falls apart mentally when cut, but the fact that Nate Campbell and Juan Manuel Marquez, the two men to beat him, are better fighters that also had a lot to do with his defeats.

Klitschko quitting with a shoulder injury against Chris Byrd and then battling Lennox Lewis to a standstill is one recent example. Another is found in the Israel Vazquez-Raul Marquez trilogy.

"Israel Vazquez is a great fighter," said Kellerman. "He won the best trilogy in—how many years do you have to go back? 20? 30? 40?—but in their first fight he quit! Marquez hurt him and badly injured his nose. He figured, *This is a good matchup for me, I know I can beat this guy. Why don't I stop now and live to fight another day?* And he came back to beat Marquez twice."

Vazquez showed that sometimes it's better to quit, better to be smart than brave. But as Kellerman noted, "The demand in boxing is that if you want to be great, you have to be willing to die."

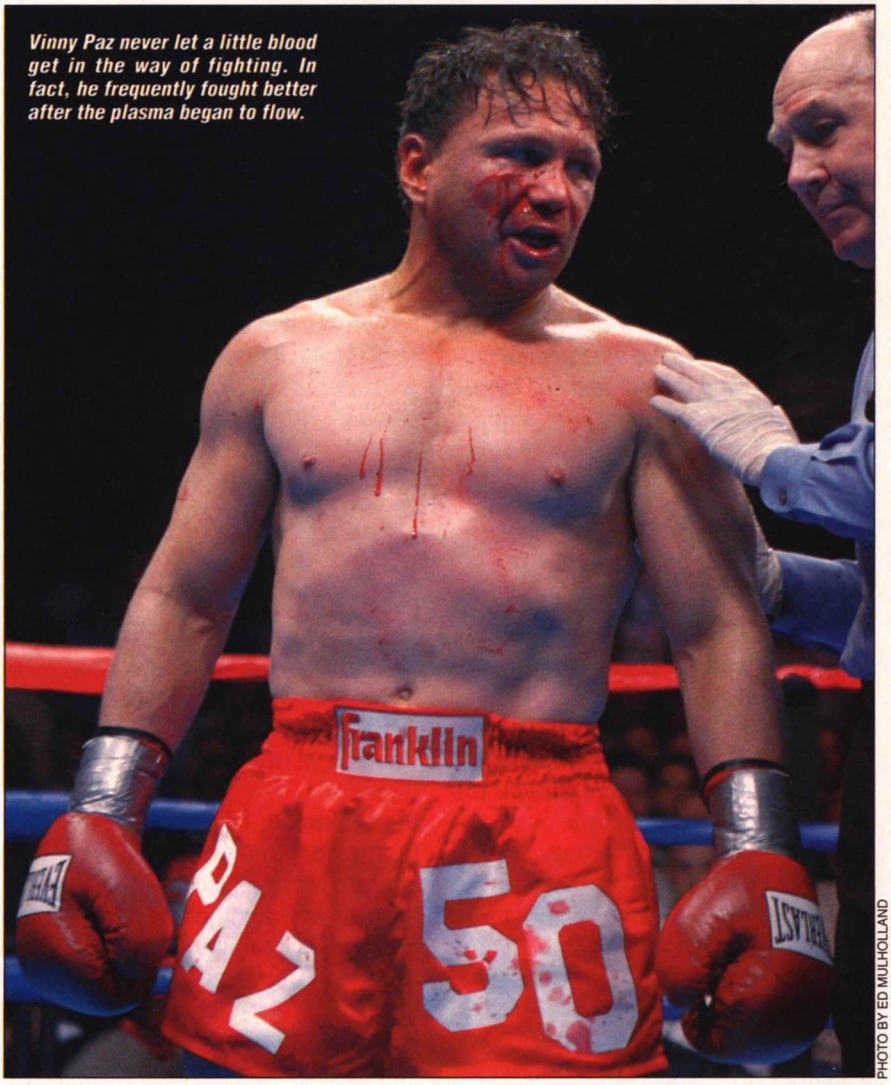
It's a lot to ask for, but being great doesn't come cheap. ■

Most of Jerry Quarry's big losses were due to cuts. The best moments of Vitali Klitschko's career came when his eyeball was within a round or two of meeting up with his sternum. Other guys see the blood and fall apart.

March 8, 2008

Young Juan Diaz, one of the game's more exciting and popular young stars, defends his lightweight alphabet titles against sharp-punching veteran Nate Campbell in Cancun, Mexico. Diaz has trouble almost from the start, but his prodigious work rate compensates. It's anyone's fight until the sixth round, when Campbell opens a gash on Diaz' left eyelid. The site of his own blood disheartens Diaz, who fades down the stretch and loses a unanimous decision. Eleven months later, Diaz meets Juan Manuel Marquez in Houston, Texas, and jumps out to an early lead. Again, his activity compensates for his opponent's greater skills. The fight is close but leaning Marquez' way when Diaz is cut over the right eye in the eighth round. Unable to see and visibly discouraged, he is stopped in the ninth.

There remains the rare instance when a fighter is pilloried for surrendering or otherwise engaging in un-fighter-like behavior and then turns around and demonstrates mettle underneath mettle. •



Vinny Paz never let a little blood get in the way of fighting. In fact, he frequently fought better after the plasma began to flow.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Glen Johnson

"Regular People Relate To Me As One Of Them"

Glen Johnson used to think Muhammad Ali was Jamaican because he heard so much about "The Greatest" while growing up in rural Clarendon, Jamaica. That was about as far as Johnson's boxing interests ventured as a child. He had no dreams of world boxing conquest growing up in Jamaica or even when he moved to the United States as a teenager.

Johnson didn't pursue the sport professionally until relatively late in life, at the age of 24, intending to use the money he earned as a down payment on a house, not make a career out of it. Now each time the 40-year-old former light heavyweight world champion returns to Jamaica, the airport's public address system blare his arrival, "The champ is back!"

Johnson, 49-12-2 (33), is much closer to the end of his career than he is to the beginning, but check out THE RING's light heavyweight ratings and you won't find a contender who would have an easy time with the old-school "Road Warrior." His hard-nosed, grinding approach, backed up by solid fundamentals and an unwavering determination, has proved the undoing of many top fighters.

In fact, Johnson is currently the only rated 175-pounder who has beaten three of THE RING's top 10 light heavies (Antonio Tarver, Roy Jones, and Clinton Woods), and he's the only one rated who's faced five of THE RING's top 10 (Bernard Hopkins, Chad Dawson, Tarver, Jones, and Woods).

*In his most recent fight, Johnson avenged a 2003 draw with a dominating 10-round victory over Daniel Judah on ESPN2's **Friday Night Fights**. At this writing, he was the mandatory challenger for WBC titlist Adrian Diaconu.*

A month after the Judah victory, THE RING Managing Editor Joseph Santoliquito spoke with the Miami-based Johnson, who talked about his fan appeal, what it was like growing up in Jamaica, and how he has managed to stay buoyant through a 16-year career pocked by bad breaks and even worse decisions.

Santoliquito reports: "You won't find a classier, more eloquent pro than Glen Johnson. He can laugh at himself, laugh at some of the misfortune that he's gone through during his career. He has the rare ability to refer to himself in the third person and still comes across as incredibly likable."

The Ring: Although you have been a victim of boxing politics, it seems as if you gained a great deal of sympathy from boxing fans that don't like the way you've been treated. Do you realize this?

Glen Johnson: I do. People can relate to my story, they relate to what has gone on with me, because I try my best for my family and I do all I can to provide for my family. That's what all Americans do. Very few people get what they feel they deserve, and when you're not as successful, you feel that even more. My story is a public one. People watch my work. I try to do what I do as professionally as possible. But regular people relate to me as one of them, as a guy who busts his butt in the gym and works hard.

As big as my victory over Roy Jones was, I've had more reaction personally to the Chad Dawson loss. People have come up to me crying in airports about how I've been jerked around and how I've been ripped off so many times. Tears came running down this one guy's face and no one ever talked to me like that—and this was after a loss. I found so many people speak from the heart. If 100 people approached me about the Roy Jones victory, 500 people approached me about the Chad Dawson loss.

It does make me feel uneasy at times, knowing people may feel sorry for me. I recognize how much people can relate to what's going on with the politics in boxing. People are victimized by politics every day, and they may have experienced the same in their jobs as I have in mine.

The Ring: Still, it seems the politics of boxing have never drained you. Why?

GJ: My opponent is not my opponent in the ring; it is the politics. That's what I think about when I get in the ring. I'm beating all the bad things that have happened to me. They want to make this guy the star, he's the guy they want, and they try to use me to get them there. That's when the politics of boxing become great. It's why I've always felt like an outsider, but to me that's good.

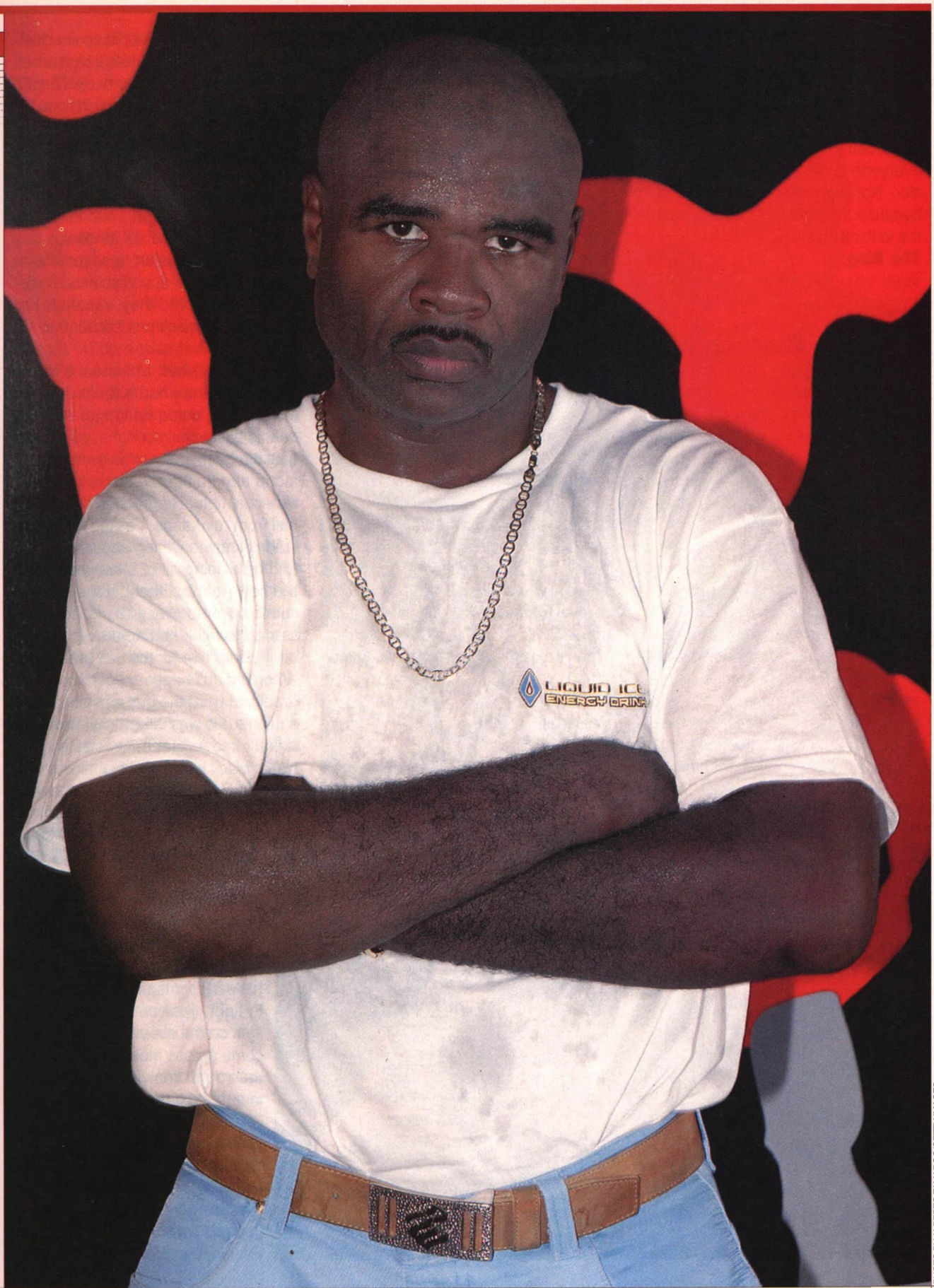


PHOTO BY ALBERTO TAMARGO/GETTY IMAGES

It's made me the fighter that I am. I wouldn't have that same determination that I fight with if I didn't go through the politics. I feel I'm the fighter that I want to be. I can fight anyone. Most guys out there can't fight everyone. I can fight everyone in the light heavyweight division. Not everyone can say that, and it's because the politics in boxing pushed me to think that way.

The Ring: We know so much about your boxing career but very little about your personal life. What was it like growing up in Jamaica?

GJ: It was beautiful and I was a kid then. You know how kids are. From when I was born to when I was 14, I lived there. It was a lot of fun. All I did was run around and have fun with the other kids *(laughs)*. I have two sets of family, because my parents split when I was young. You can say I was conceived from a school crush type of thing *(laughs)*. They had me when they were both 17. My father was in a better area than my mother, but my (maternal) grandmother raised me. Shortly after I was born, my mom left Jamaica and came to America. I would visit my father and my father's family in a different area. I'd say there was a 10-mile stretch in between the two homes, but it was a lot different. I had all I needed from my family. I never went without clothes or anything, but I could look back at it and say my mother's side was from a poorer area.

The Ring: What did your father do?

GJ: My granddad and my father were working with a bauxite company in Jamaica, working on produce and things like that. The company they worked for produced mostly sugar, sugarcane, and rum, stuff like that. But they were never into boxing.

The Ring: Did you want to leave Jamaica?

GJ: I was forced to leave when I was 10. Well, they tried to force me to leave *(laughs)*. I didn't. I didn't leave until four years later, at 14, in June 1984. I think then I started to have a little more sense that things were better in America. I wasn't good in school. By 14, I started to get a better understanding of what life was about and I heard and read so much about the opportunities in America, I thought I'd give that a shot. I used to speak to my mother once a week. She always tried to convince me to come to America. They had everything taken care of when I was 10, but my passport got messed up and that was a slow process. When it was time to go, my mother came back to Jamaica to get everything squared away.

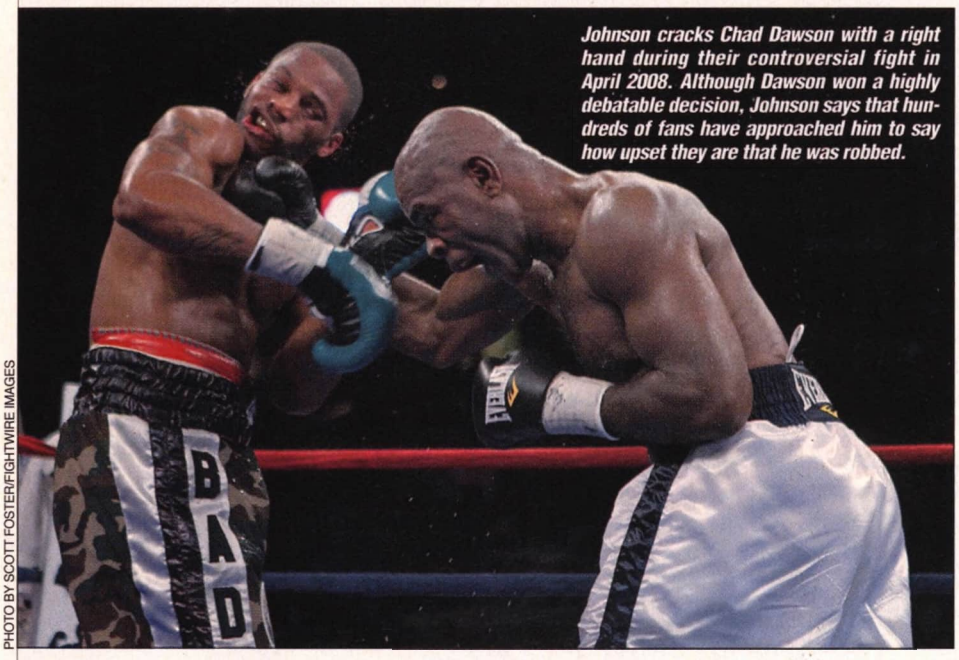
The Ring: Was arriving in the United States a big culture shock?

GJ: It was. I had problems right away. I left an environment where I was totally in a comfort zone. People spoke differently here and I didn't like it at all *(laughs)*. I wanted to go back. I understood English, but my English is on the rougher side, with a Jamaican accent, saying half words, and those half words break into the next word. Jamaicans can speak and say things that Americans don't understand. I had to learn to pronounce my words all of the way through. I had to start to adapt to what was available here, and you had American kids here and they wanted to test you. It was a quick process for me.

The Ring: What happened?

GJ: My first week in school I was in junior high and I had a football player, this big guy, come up to me. We were on this basketball court. I used to shoot baskets by myself and this kid saw me alone and he figured he'd pick on this kid—me, right! He grabbed the basketball from my hands. I asked for it back. I didn't know anything about basketball and he's doing all of these things with the ball. At first, I thought the guy was coming over to play with me, but then I started to think he came over to show off. I asked him for the ball back again. When it didn't happen, I got angry fast. I realized what the guy was about after a minute. He was talking stuff to me and I didn't know what he was saying. He was a black kid who thought I was from Haiti, and he no idea what I was saying. Maybe he thought all black kids with accents came from Haiti, I don't know *(laughs)*.

He was there just making fun of me, so I snatched the basketball back from him. He started shoving me and I started to f___ him up. I'm from a place where we didn't have a lot of fear. I didn't know how to fight, like you fight in a ring or fight on the streets in America. You come across most Jamaicans and they don't know how to fight with their hands, they'll use something. For me, I grabbed the closest thing I could get my hands on and I went to work. I grabbed a stick and beat him with it *(laughs)*. If I broke that stick, I'd go pull a big branch off a tree and beat him with that *(laughs)*. Everyone in the schoolyard saw it.



Johnson cracks Chad Dawson with a right hand during their controversial fight in April 2008. Although Dawson won a highly debatable decision, Johnson says that hundreds of fans have approached him to say how upset they are that he was robbed.

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

That was my first and last fight. I never had to fight again *(laughs)*.

The Ring: Were you ever in a fight before that in Jamaica?

GJ: Oh yeah. I fought plenty in Jamaica. I used to fight my friends in backyard fights and schoolyard fights. In Jamaica, you see three guys fighting one guy, and I was always the guy stepping in and defending the weaker guy. I stuck up for plenty of people. I liked fighting, to be honest with you *(laughs)*. I liked it and I could do it well. Maybe that's why I liked it, I don't know. But I got respect doing it. If there was ever a fight, my friends would come and get me, and a crowd would build to see me fight. We fought with anything, and I hit people with rocks, anything. Some guy was running away from me, I just grabbed a rock and threw it at him.

The Ring: Did it ever reach a serious point?

GJ: It never got to a life-or-death situation. There were a lot of busted heads though *(laughs)*, and I got hit in the head and was bleeding. I got a lot of those myself. I got one in the back of my head after I beat this guy early in the school day. The day was over, and I was walking out of class, and he came back and hit me in the back of the head with a rock. I got back at him *(laughs)*. I caught up with him. That was my life. It came between when I was 10 to 13, and that taught me not to fear anything, because I was always fighting.

The Ring: What did you gain from that?

GJ: If you've been around fighting and confrontation all of your life, you get used to it. You know how to deal with it properly. If you're around someone who was never hit in their life, they'll freak the hell out, yelling and screaming.

The Ring: What other things were different in the U.S.?

GJ: I couldn't believe the way some of these kids would talk to their parents in America. In Jamaica, if you misbehave in the class, the teachers gives you a whooping, and if it's bad, they give you another whooping in the principal's office, and then another when you get home. There were whoopings all around *(laughs)*.

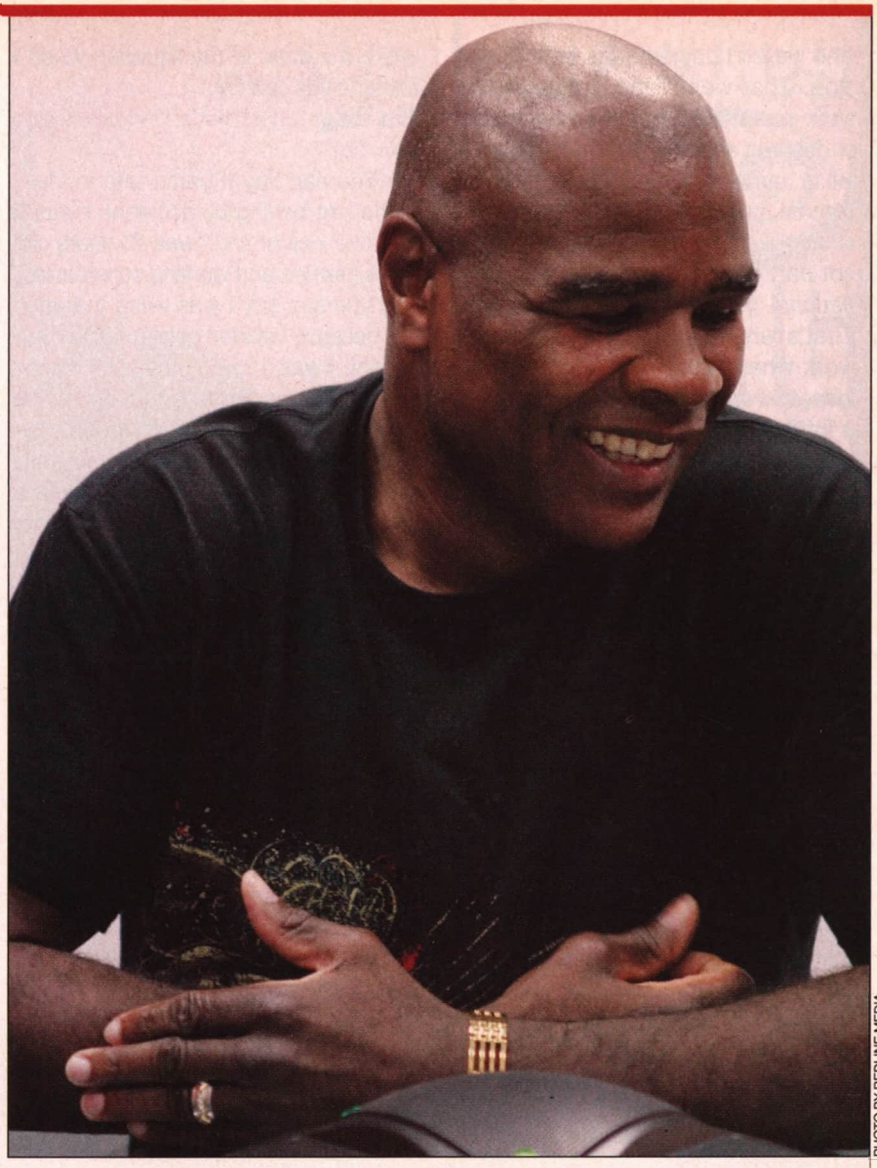


PHOTO BY REDLINE MEDIA

"In Jamaica, you see three guys fighting one guy, and I was always the guy stepping in and defending the weaker guy. I stuck up for plenty of people. I liked fighting, to be honest with you."

This was all new when I came to America. It was really different. I would never speak to my mother the way these American kids speak to their parents. My sister was born here, and the way my sister talked to my mother when she was eight, 10 years old, and she's a grown woman today (26), I couldn't see it. I'm 40 and I would never talk to my mother that way. I have a Jamaican background and everything my sister has is based on the American side.

The Ring: How did you adjust socially?

GJ: You have some adjustments, especially with the ladies. American girls liked the rough guys, at least from where I was from, in Coconut Grove, Miami. I went from ghetto Jamaica to ghetto America *(laughs)*. The girls like the rough guys and they liked guys

who weren't doing things on the legal side. That wasn't me. I always had sunk in my head as a child don't steal or don't do anything like that. You go to jail in Jamaica, they look at you as an outcast, but here it's accepted and it's almost like if you don't go to jail, you're not part of the group and the culture *(laughs)*. I didn't want to have a record. That's why I started to immediately work when I got here. That was my idea, to work in the summer and make a little money here and there. Then eventually get a full-time job. I never got into any of the other stuff.

The Ring: You're a big, tough guy who can handle himself. Did any of those "rough guys" ever try to get you to join them?

GJ: I associated with a lot of guys like that, guys who sold drugs and things like that, but it never appealed to me. I didn't like the risk. That's a business where you always have to worry about police, who you're selling to, whom you're buying from. Everyone that does that is dealing with a risk, a risk that was too great for me. Besides, I always had a sense that I could do better. I always said to myself that I didn't travel miles and miles to America to sit in a jail cell. I wanted to make the most of my situation when I came to this country.

The Ring: When did boxing come into your life?

GJ: You can say it came late in life. I came into boxing by accident. I was a little overweight and I was 20 years old. I was married and working construction, and you can say I was living the good life, because I started getting a little overweight. I was 195 pounds, with skinny legs and skinny arms, and a big, round belly *(laughs)*. I was looking for an exercise program. I had to lose my belly *(laughs)*. The PAL was opening up a boxing gym near me in the Coconut Grove area of Miami, and I remember going up to the guy asking him what I had to do to join. I also asked the guy how much it would cost. He told me it was free for people who lived in the area. That was great news to me. Free fit into my budget and I signed up *(laughs)*. That was my first experience with boxing.

The Ring: What were you doing with your life then?

GJ: I was a construction worker. I was a carpenter's apprentice, which meant I worked all of the time for half the pay of what a regular carpenter would get *(laughs)*. I never minded working hard. I was going to an eight-hour shift and then I'd go to the gym at around five o'clock. I moved to the U.S. in June 1984 when I was 14. Six years later, in 1990, that's when I first went into boxing.

The Ring: That opened a whole new world for you, didn't it?

GJ: Yes and no. I used to think I was a good fighter, but once I got into the ring, I learned I didn't know how to fight at all. Everything I thought I knew was wrong. I couldn't grab any sticks in the ring (*laughs*). Physically, I realized, I wasn't a strong guy. I started hitting the bag and started to build strength. That's where I began. That's how it started.

The Ring: How did you juggle your marriage and the time commitment to boxing?

GJ: I made a commitment to my first wife, Rosemarie. She was Jamaican as well, and her older sister didn't want her dating me. She gave her an ultimatum: Me or her. When her sister found out she was still dating me, she threatened to throw her out. Rosemarie showed a commitment to me, and I wanted to show a commitment to her, so I married her. My mother wasn't too happy about it. She didn't want me leaving, but I was 18 and she couldn't say anything to stop me. I started making preparations and I wasn't going to let her live by herself. I felt I did the right thing then, but it was not a smart thing to do. Looking back, I was too young to make that step. We lived together for 11 years and were married for 10 years. I found out at that age you don't want to be committed like that, but I did it, and that's that *(laughs)*. I had friends who were doing other things, but I couldn't do those things *(laughs)*.

I'll say this, when I started to train when I was 20, Rosemarie was very supportive. She went through my amateur days with me and my early-pro days. We came through difficult times and went separate ways.

PHOTO BY ANDREW BUDD/ACTION IMAGES

Johnson tags Clinton Woods with a flush right en route to winning the vacant IBF light heavyweight title via 12-round decision in Sheffield, England, on February 6, 2004. It was the fight that changed "The Road Warrior's" life and launched the best year of his career.

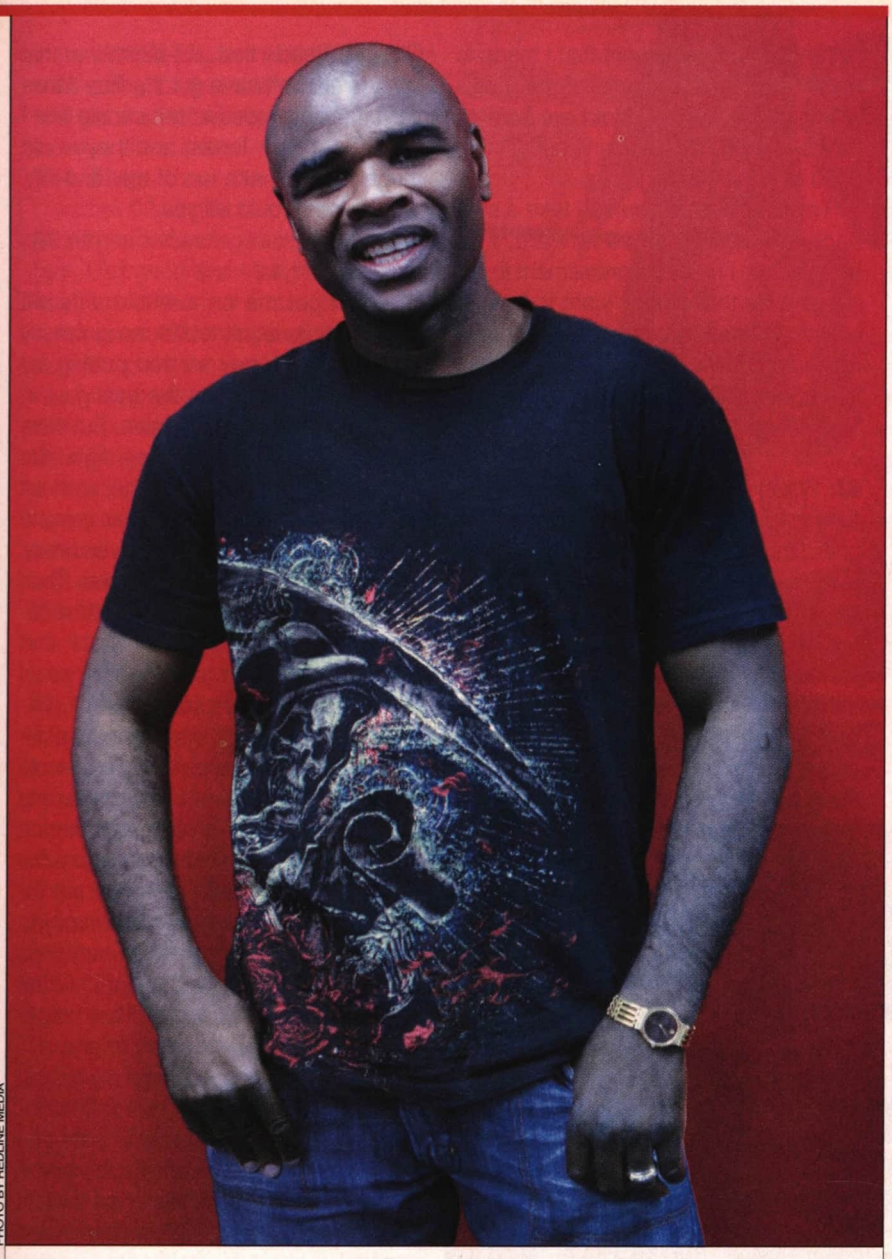


PHOTO BY REDLINE MEDIA

"I came into boxing by accident ... I started getting a little overweight. I was 195 pounds, with skinny legs and skinny arms, and a big, round belly. I was looking for an exercise program. I had to lose my belly."

The Ring: Were there times when you felt like giving up?

GJ: I had those thoughts a lot of times, but those times were brief. When reality kicked in after a week or two, you realize your decision only affects you, and I had to make the right one. I always tried to make the right decision and see where some sense came in.

Mentally, I think I'm strong. My mental strength pushed me through the times I was too tired to go to the gym. There were plenty of times I was too tired to go to the gym, and plenty of times I was too

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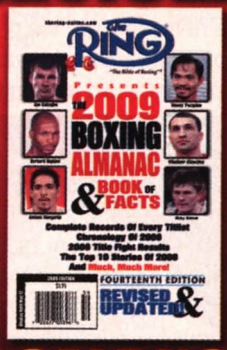

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tired to finish a day's work *(laughs)*. I got married when I was 18 years old. I had a lot of things going on. I came from people who worked for a living. I never had anyone sitting around in my family waiting for a handout.

I was still working eight, 10 hours sometimes. I'd come home, take a shower, go to the gym, run three to five miles, go home, take a shower, and go back to work the next day. That's what I did, and I did that all the way up until I fought Bernard Hopkins. When I fought Bernard Hopkins, that changed everything because I finally made some money.

The Ring: How much did you get for that fight?

GJ: It was around $50,000, and that was the biggest payday I had until then. There were times in my career when I fought a four-rounder and I wasn't even paid. The manager paid the promoter to get me on the card and I wasn't paid. That's what I was told at the time. I said nothing. The commitment that I made to myself was what I needed to do. I was willing to that then. I would get $400 to fight a four-rounder. I wasn't going to let $400 stop me from fighting.

I'm a believer in you can take a step back to take two steps forward, I do believe that. I made a commitment to get out of a life that I didn't want to be in. I wasn't willing to do something illegal to make something out of myself. I fought for opportunity, not just for money.

The Ring: What fight changed your career?

GJ: When I went to England and beat Clinton Woods. I finally accomplished my goal. I thought I should have got a championship belt sooner than I did, but that's the fight that got me the Roy Jones fight. I remember all the things I heard about the Roy Jones fight and how everyone didn't think I deserved that fight. But I had been making pennies my whole career. I was very willing to show what I always knew I could do. But I had to beat Clinton Woods first. If I didn't win that fight, I wouldn't have got the Roy Jones fight. I always used to tell people that I could beat Roy Jones, and they would laugh at me, make fun of me, and say, "Roy Jones would kill you."

The Ring: How much did beating Jones change your life?

GJ: That put me on a whole different level. Everyone started to recognize my skill level and they started putting my name up there among the best guys in the light heavyweight division. But there is a side story to that Jones' fight. We were training for Joe Calzaghe, and I felt so sharp and so sure that I was going to blow Joe out of the water. I was ready. It's the best I ever felt in my career. Then the day before we were going to the airport for England, we got a call that Calzaghe was hurt and the fight would be postponed. I took some time off.

That was a huge disappointment for me. I was ready. I was stopping people in sparring. They were taking sparring partners home and bringing new ones in *(laughs)*, but I didn't feel so sharp the second time we were getting ready for Calzaghe. Still, we were on our way to the airport, in the car, getting ready to go to the plane when we got a call that Calzaghe was hurt again. That was it. The fight was off. I was very angry.

Calzaghe was going to be my biggest payday. I was going to get $600,000 for that fight. Then I was left with nothing. I went back to working construction at that point. I didn't quit my job. I was a world champion at a construction site, driving in nails.

The Ring: But your persistence was finally rewarded.

GJ: We saw Jones get knocked out by Tarver, and they thought I was going to lie down for him. I guess that's what they thought. It worked out for me. They offered me more ($1.1-million) for the Jones fight than the Calzaghe fight. They really thought I was nothing. I went on the Internet and saw these comments that I didn't deserve the fight. I used those things for motivation. Everything I could do as a person, fully compete to my fullest potential, I would do to beat Jones. The funny thing is that I was never as sharp for the Jones fight as I was

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Referee Bill Clancy counts out Roy Jones in the ninth round of Jones' September 2004 bout with Johnson in Memphis, Tennessee. Like many viewers, Johnson was worried that he had seriously injured Jones, but fortunately there was no permanent damage.

in the first Calzaghe training camp. I'm still hunting for that sharpness and that strength. I wasn't as strong and confident as I was since then.

The Ring: Nevertheless, you still starched Superman.

GJ: When I was going into the Roy Jones fight, I felt good and I felt sharp, but not like I was in the first Calzaghe training camp. I was still hurting people, they just wouldn't go down, but you could tell I was hurting people *(laughs)*. I did have some doubts though. I wondered if I was still missing something. My confidence level was 95, 98 percent. Once the bell rang, I told myself to go out and do it. I was being successful and kept doing it. I kept doing it.

The Ring: To viewers, it looked like you'd almost killed Jones. Is that what you thought after knocking him stiff?

GJ: I didn't realize how serious that punch was. I thought I hit him with a good punch, but after a while, seeing him down there like that, there were a lot of different things going through my mind. I was excited that I won. I was able to exhale, knowing that I accomplished what I wanted to do for the night. But I had to see what was going on with him. When I saw that he was responsive, that he wasn't hurt, I felt better. People tell me many times today when I see them that they thought I killed Roy Jones. I never want to ever experience anyone ever getting seriously hurt. When I walked across the ring to see him, I was hoping to see exactly what I did see, that he was responding. We're all boxers; we're not out to kill people. Fans come to see the fights and everyone goes home happy after the fight. That's what I do. I was afraid Roy Jones wasn't going to get up. I saw his two sons crying when I was leaving the ring, and I had to tell them that their father was going to be all right.

The Ring: Everyone deals with success differently. How did you deal with it?

GJ: Things were very different. I finally could say that I made it after all these years of searching for that one moment of success. My whole life changed dramatically. When I called to make reservations at fancy places, the owners would come and take pictures and you eat for free. I remember saying to my wife (Jillian), "When I couldn't pay for these things, I couldn't get anything for free. Now I can pay for these things and I really don't need it now *(laughs)*."

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Johnson poses with his RING light heavyweight championship belt and the Boxing Writers Association of America 2004 Fighter of the Year plaque. Johnson was also selected as THE RING's Fighter of the Year, making him the first and only Jamaica-born fighter to be so honored.

Everyone who has been around my whole life told me "Glen, I knew you my whole life and you haven't changed a bit." I have a jealous wife, so my freedom that I once had, I wasn't able to do those things *(laughs)*. Yeah, you can say I got put on a leash. She was just jealous, afraid of everything I guess, that women would come after me, people who never paid any attention to me before. All of a sudden, everyone wanted some Glen Johnson, so what I can say *(laughs)*.

The Ring: After knocking out Jones, you beat Tarver. Is it safe to say that 2004 was the greatest year of your career?

GJ: Everything seemed to be happening right for me, for once. I won a decision against Tarver. I was Fighter of the Year for 2004. Then I had a rematch with Tarver and lost the decision. He never wanted to fight me again. Tarver did three fights with Roy Jones, but didn't want three fights with me. But no one knows what really happened with the second Tarver fight.

The Ring: What do you mean?

GJ: I wasn't sharp. I couldn't get into my groove. My managers and trainers wanted to pull out of the fight. I had surgery on both elbows and there were a lot of loose pieces in my elbows that were giving me problems. That set me back. But we didn't want to say anything and make it public. I don't like making excuses. Looking back, I should have postponed the Tarver rematch. I was advised to postpone the fight. Everyone around me wanted me to pull out, but it was my call. I was rusty. In my mind, if I kept sparring and training, my sharpness would come back over time, but it just didn't. It wasn't a good decision that I made, but it was my decision. I have no one to blame. I thought I won the rematch, but that's the one thing I would change if I could.

The Ring: Did it seem everything you built before the Tarver rematch was suddenly lost?

GJ: Yeah, a little *(laughs)*. For some reason, I felt like Tarver would grant me a third fight. I don't know why, but in the back of my head I thought I'd get another crack at him. I just went back to the gym and worked on my sharpness, trying to find myself. Tarver didn't want to fight me anymore. He just wanted to take the easy road. Maybe he thought

he'd get an easy fight against Bernard Hopkins. That was very sweet. I was glad to see Tarver get whooped like that. But again, I was disappointed with Hopkins for not fighting me.

The Ring: You lost a lot of close decisions in fights many people thought you won. Have you ever felt you really lost a fight?

GJ: One time in my career I can say I lost. I have no problems saying it either. It's when I fought Bernard Hopkins. He's the only one who ever stopped me. We were at two different skill levels. I wasn't ready for him at that time. I believe I'm there right now and I would love a chance to show the people what I can do, and I'd like to think he feels that way as well. But that's the only fight I'd say that I lost.

The Ring: It doesn't look like Chad Dawson wants any part of you again. What options do you have?

GJ: I was hoping Hopkins would look at me, but he thinks he has a better chance in the Tomasz Adamek fight than he would facing a Glen Johnson. The only thing left out there is a mandatory for the WBC title against Adrian Diaconu, and I'm in line for that. The plan is to go and get that belt and become WBC champion and see if that will attract any of the major guys out there to me again. I keep sending challenges out there to everyone. No one wants a part of me. It is really the same old story.

The Ring: Did it bother you that right after beating Daniel Judah he claimed you had to be on steroids, "because no 40-year-old could fight with that amount of energy"?

GJ: *(Laughing)* That wasn't public. I felt like that was a desperate response. He told my manager or his manager told my manager that. Anyway, it's funny. I don't understand how someone can say someone's on steroids without any evidence. Can you say that because the other guy is a better person and in better shape? That said way more about Judah than it did about me. He's 31 and I'm 40. He's 31 and he's not me at 40. He'll never be. My manager told me that he said that and I thought it was funny. I still do. I basically thought it was a poor excuse he was using for his lack of effort. That's as serious as I took that comment *(laughs)*.

The Ring: Do you think steroids are a problem in boxing?

GJ: I don't really believe so, because we go through testing. I can see it as a problem when titles aren't at stake or on smaller shows. I would never even think about doing steroids. I'm already scary to all of the light heavyweights out there. I don't think there is anyone who can beat me, and I don't need steroids. The only help I need is God's help.

The Ring: What are your post-career plans? Do you have an exit strategy set up?

GJ: I haven't gone back to construction since a month before I fought Roy Jones and I don't plan on going back *(laughs)*. I've been doing a little color commentary and I'm looking at that as a possibility. I will open my own promotional company for concerts and comedians, stuff like that. I wouldn't be involved with boxing at all after I retire. I think De La Hoya took my dream with what I'd like to do. I can't get at that level. He has the bookoo money I don't have *(laughs)*.

But I have no time frame on when I'll retire. I feel good right now. As long as I keep fighting at the level I am, with a chance at some major fights with major money attached to them, I'm still fighting. If I realize my skill level is diminishing I will decide to hang it up. My wife is not pressuring me, but we talk about it and she sees where my plans and goals are. I'm a stubborn guy *(laughs)*, but I'd even be willing to listen to the boxing media. If they say that I've slipped and I can't fight at this level, I would hang it up. The Dawson fight is my measuring stick as to what I still have left. I thought I beat him,

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Johnson looks on in dismay as Antonio Tarver has his arm raised in victory after their June 2005 rematch in which Tarver regained the light heavyweight championship. Johnson always felt that he would get a rubber match with Tarver, but it never happened.

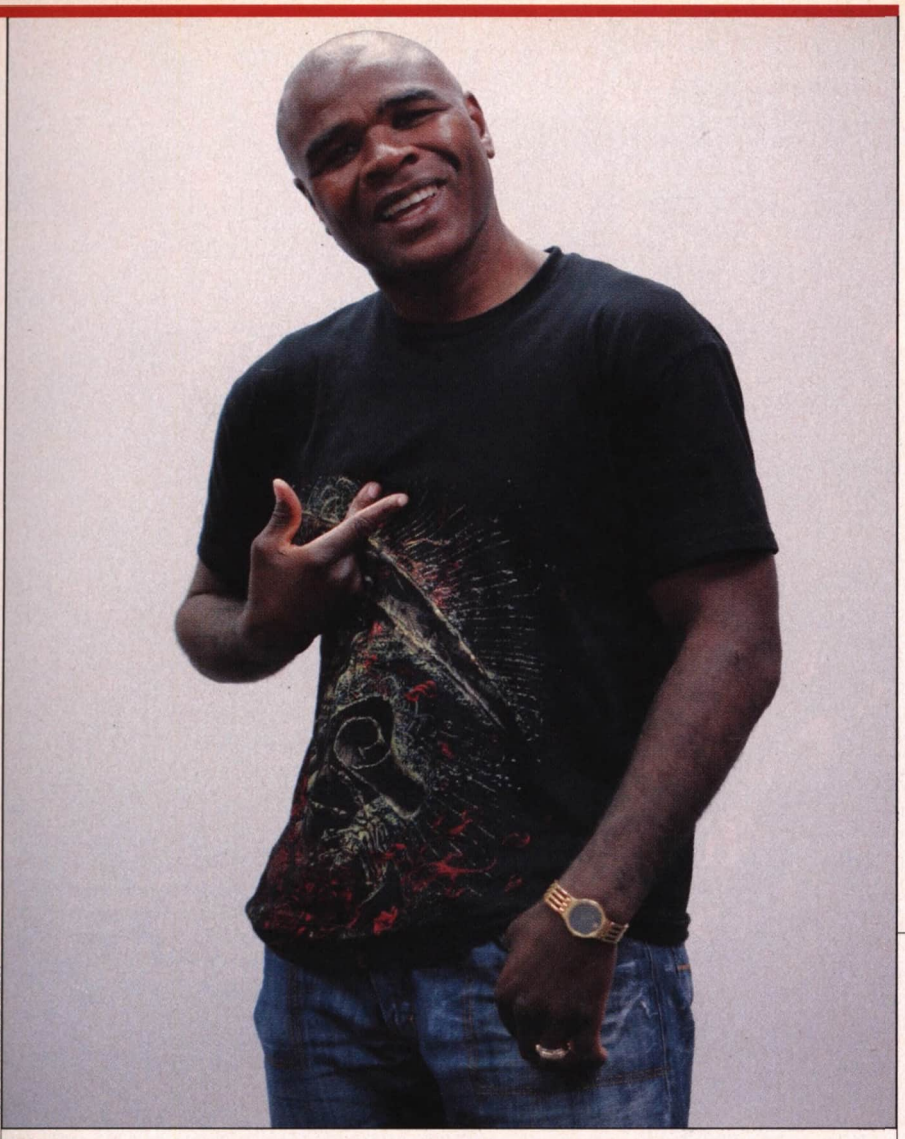


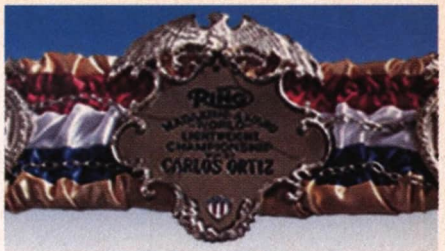
PHOTO BY REDLINE MEDIA

"It's hard to say if I'm a Hall of Famer because I really don't know what body of work is involved in that. But I'm on board with it if that's what someone from THE RING wrote."

and I put fear into Dawson, his handlers, and promoters. That speaks volumes that I still have something left.

The Ring: There was a column in the last issue of THE RING saying you deserve to be in the Hall of Fame when your career is over. Do you think you're a Hall of Famer?

GJ: It's hard to say if I'm a Hall of Famer because I really don't know what body of work is involved in that. But I'm on board with it if that's what someone from THE RING wrote *(laughs)*. When I first started boxing, I just wanted to make $20,000 to put as a down payment on my house. That was my short-term goal, but after doing that and being able to accomplish what I have, I have nothing but thanks for my boxing career. With all of the ups and downs in boxing I've had, it's been completely worth it. There's been nothing better than what I'm doing. Being in the Hall of Fame would be icing on the cake. ■



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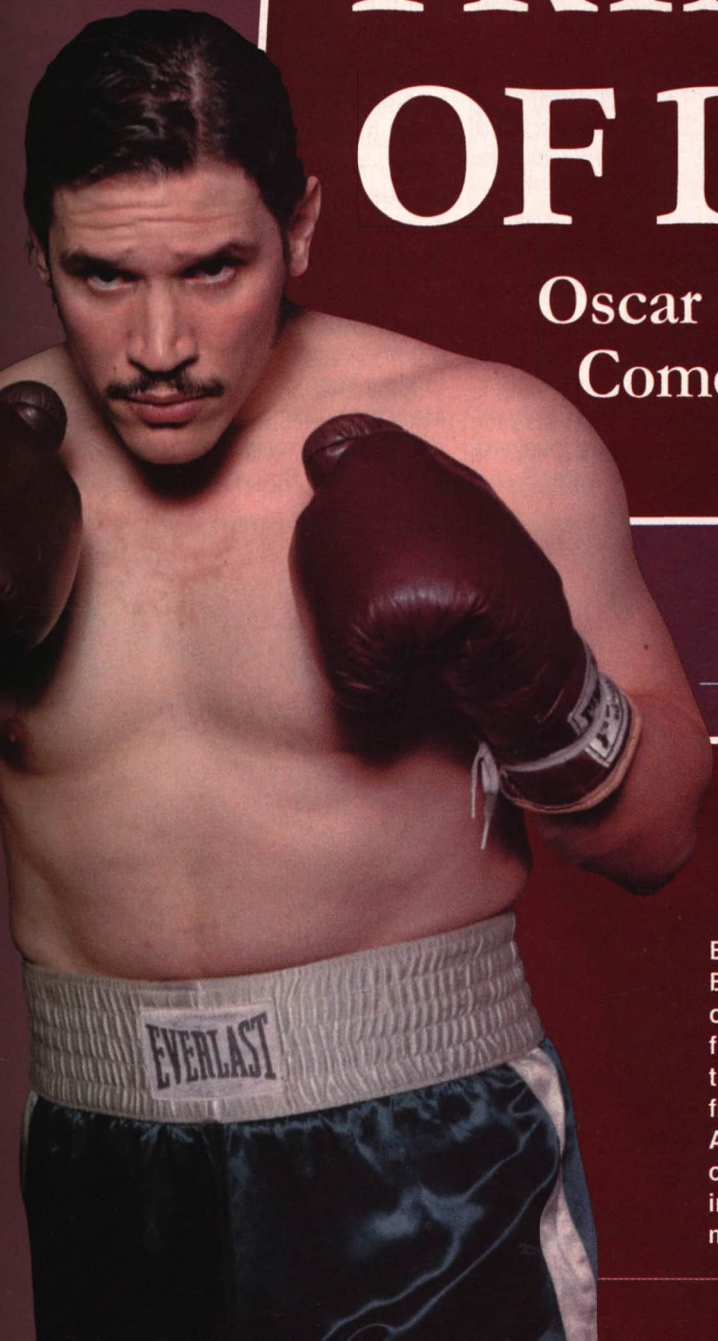
A jubilant Bonavena celebrates one of the 68 victories he tallied during his turbulent career (left). A new movie based on the Argentinean heavyweight's life will star Sergio Paris-Mencheta (right) as the boxer.

LOVE RANCH TRIANGLE OF DEATH

Oscar Bonavena's Tragic Life Comes To The Silver Screen



"I love Reno. Maybe I never leave."
—Oscar Bonavena, three months before he was killed

By Don Stradley

Just before sunrise on May 22, 1976, a hotheaded Oscar Bonavena arrived at the Mustang Ranch, a 104-room luxury brothel eight miles east of Reno. Brothel owner Joe Conforte had warned security that Bonavena was "trouble," but the guards, a collection of ex-cons whose main job was to prevent prostitutes from leaving during their 12-hour shifts, couldn't intimidate Bonavena. He'd always forced opponents to fight, even great ones like Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali. That's how he rolled. Later on, after bedlam broke out, a witness claimed to have heard Bonavena shouting. The most vulgar of trash-talkers, Bonavena's slurs must've filled the morning air like drizzle.

Bonavena advanced quickly after turning pro in January 1964. By November, after only six bouts, he beat Dick Wipperman, who was 26-3-1 (12) going into the their match at Madison Square Garden.

Bonavena had been in Reno trying to revive a career that had always been a strange, two-faced beast: His Argentine countrymen adored him as if he were Babe Ruth. In America, he was written off as a granite-jawed clown, an eccentric character who wore loud clothes and destroyed hotel rooms. Reno suited him. He liked the gambling, the women, and the promise that glowed on every billboard promoting "The Biggest Little City In The World."

But Bonavena was now among people with their own methods of negotiation. Police found Bonavena's dead body at the brothel's front gate, his heart pierced by a bullet.

The case was bizarre even by Nevada standards. One of Comforte's employees, an ex-felon named Willard Brymer, was charged with the killing. Another employee confessed to planting a gun on Bonavena's body, which wasn't necessary because Bonavena always carried a .38 revolver. Days before the shooting, Bonavena informed police that his trailer had been broken into and his passport destroyed. While at the Argentine embassy in San Francisco to replace his passport, Bonavena left a hand-written letter with the consul stating that Conforte had threatened his life. Dora Bonavena, the boxer's wife, had known something was wrong.

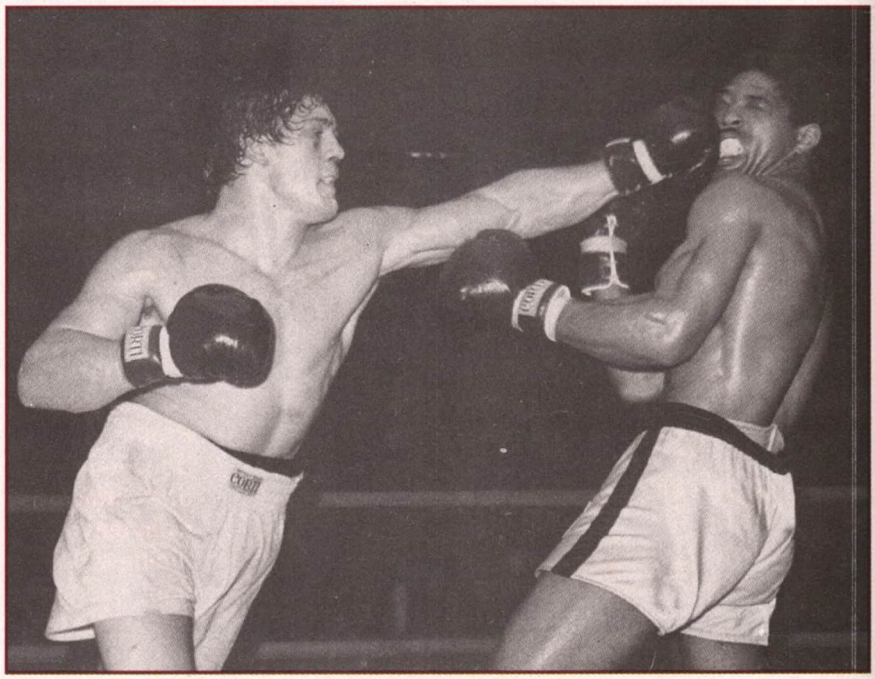
"He was unhappy and said he had many problems," she said. "He asked me to pray for him and to understand he could not flee like a coward."

The tale grew seedier. The 33-year-old fighter was rumored to be involved with Conforte's 56-year-old wife, Sally. Depending on who told the story, it was either true love or Bonavena was providing stud service to make the rent.

Love Ranch, a feature film scheduled for release this year, is loosely based on the Bonavena murder. The film stars Joe Pesci and Helen Mirren as the brothel owners, while Spanish actor Sergio Peris-Mencheta plays the doomed fighter. Mencheta may never again play a character as complex as Bonavena. The late Jose Torres once described Bonavena by saying, "He had a hell of a big soul. You never knew if he was an angel or a devil."

The son of a trolley car motorman, Oscar Natalio Bonavena was born September 25, 1942, in Buenos Aires. The story he often told about being descended from Roman gladiators was probably a myth, but as a child he knew his future would involve fighting. When invited to ride in a Mardi Gras parade with other children, he dressed in boxing gear, using a hunk of burnt cork to paint himself a black eye.

After several amateur fights, including one that saw him disqualified for biting an opponent, Bonavena journeyed to New York to make an imprint on the Mecca of boxing. Standing just under six feet and weighing approximately 210 pounds, Bonavena was built like a



Roberto Davila takes a left to the face during his bout with Bonavena in June 1968. Davila was victim number four in an eight-fight winning streak that carried Bonavena to a title shot against Joe Frazier.

rhino. Charlie Goldman, the man who transformed Rocky Marciano from a crude slugger into a champion, was Bonavena's trainer in those days. Goldman told *The New York Times*, "He hits harder than Marciano did."

Despite Goldman's efforts, Bonavena remained crude. Goldman's biggest challenge was to keep Bonavena from smiling during fights. Bonavena once said, "You know why I take things jokingly? Because I suffered from the worst poverty and I learned to know people. That's why I always turn to the funny side of things."

Bonavena had plenty to laugh about. This was 1960s electro-pastel New York, and fun was in. For a photo shoot, Madison Square Garden publicity chief John Condon dressed Bonavena as a caveman. When Condon overheard shaggy-haired Bonavena singing a Beatles tune, he nicknamed him "Ringo" after the band's famous drummer. Another stunt involved Bonavena leading a live bull up the steps of the Manhattan Savings Bank.

"He wanted to be like Ali," said Taylor Hackford, director of *Love Ranch*. "Not in style, but in terms of showmanship."

New York writers, reacting to a publicity campaign worthy of a visiting raja, were cynical. "Bonavena has a face that seems to have been hacked from low-grade marble with a chipped chisel," one reported. "He looks more like a wrestling hero than a fighter," said another. Robert Lipsyte observed, "Bonavena seems to hit hard, although most of his blows are thrown from awkward positions that offer no real leverage, and he never follows a good punch with another."

Bonavena's unhinged style kept him in the heavyweight ranks for many years and made him a star at home. He was soon living in an expensive house with Dora and their two children, and rocketing around Buenos Aires in his white Mercedes Benz. He sang Spanish pop hits on Argentine television. But even wins over good fighters such as Greg Peralta and George Chuvalo failed to impress American critics. *Sports Illustrated*'s Mark Kram called Bonavena "an unpardonable bore in the ring." But Kram added that Bonavena was sly.

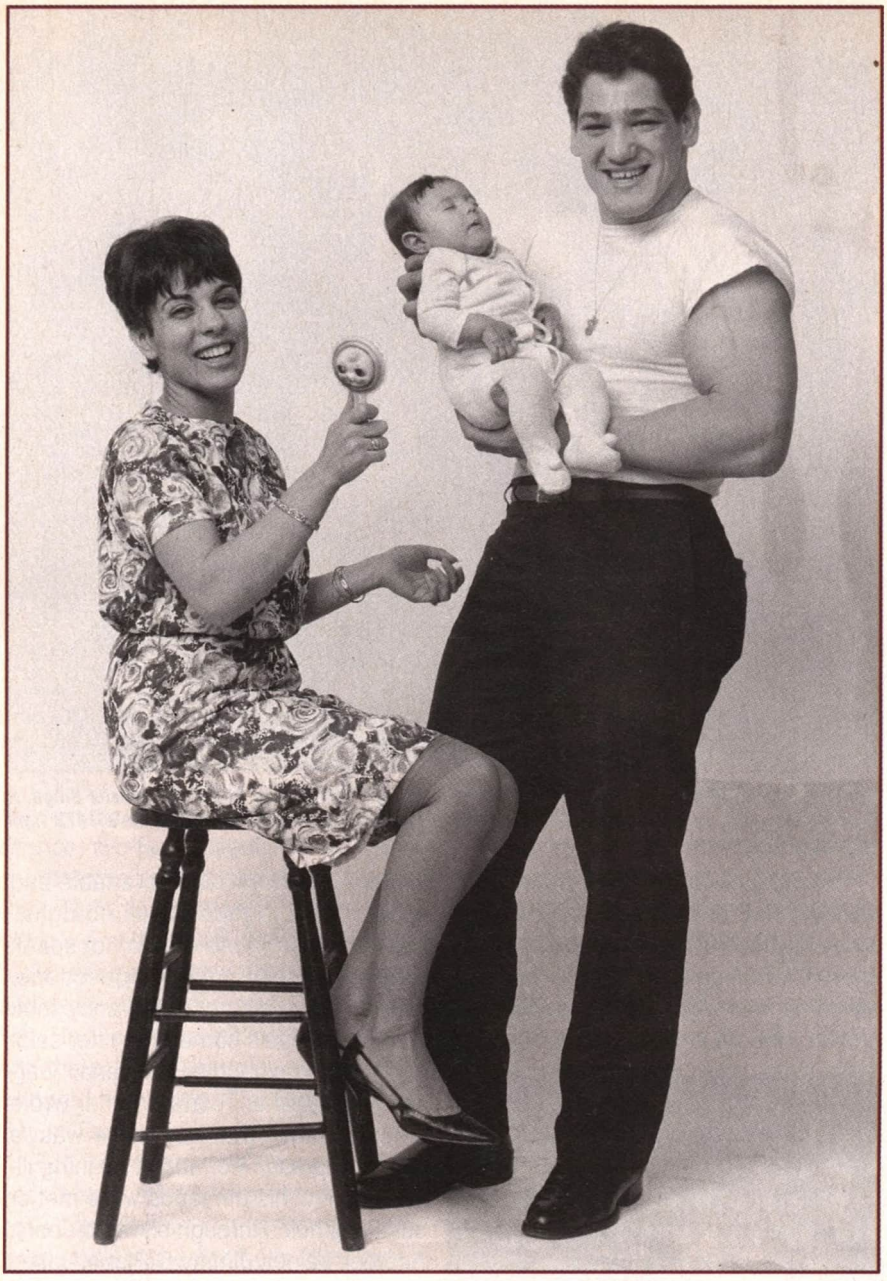
Madison Square Garden publicist John Condon holds up traffic while Bonavena coaxes Bingo, a 2,000-pound bull, down a Manhattan street as a publicity stunt prior to Bonavena's 1972 fight with Floyd Patterson.

"Everyone—mistakenly—has at one time or another defined him as just a charming idiot. The trouble is that he is not one. He is an unscrupulous beggar drowning in megalomania who abuses people, and he has abused enough of them to the point where he now owns a clothing store, a restaurant, a nightclub, and a barbershop in Argentina," Kram wrote.

Bonavena became the stone that other fighters sharpened themselves on. He put Frazier on the deck twice during their 1966 bout, only to lose via split decision. After the WBA stripped Ali of the title for refusing induction into the military, Bonavena participated in the 1967 tournament to name the new champion. He whipped Karl Mildenberger, but was eliminated after losing a grueling bout to Jimmy Ellis. When Frazier earned title recognition in New York, a rematch with Bonavena was made. Frazier won again on points. Incredibly, challenger Bonavena ended up with a bigger payday than champion Frazier by $10,000.

"In negotiations, Oscar can be exasperating," Garden promoter Harry Markson said. Bonavena's chief strategy was to slap his meaty hand on a table and shout, "Gimme money or I no fight." Sometimes he'd pretend to not speak English, to avoid difficult questions. Hall of Fame trainer Gil Clancy took over Bonavena's corner, but later said, "Nobody could handle Bonavena." Garden matchmaker Teddy Brenner wrote in his memoirs that Bonavena was "a pain in the ass," not above feigning illnesses until his demands were met or punching holes through plywood doors. Another trainer, Jimmy DiPiano, called him a Jekyll & Hyde, "so temperamental you wouldn't believe it."

Bonavena finished his career at 58-9-1 (44), but it was his 1970 bout with Ali that made him, for a brief time, a household name among American fans. Ali was the most famous athlete on the planet, yet Bonavena pushed him, crowded him, forced him to play his hand, until the 15th round when Ali zapped him with a left hook ("like a wrecking ball from outer space," wrote Norman Mailer). Bonavena was dropped three times in that round, but when referee Mark Conn waved the bout over, it was Ali who seemed relieved. When Ali learned of Bonavena's



Bonavena cradles his baby daughter, Adrian, while wife Dora shakes a rattle. Sadly, by the time he was killed the fighter was separated from his family, spending most of his time hanging around a brothel outside of Reno, Nevada.

murder, he told the United Press, "He was a good fighter and I respected him. He was a big, strong guy, and I needed everything I knew to put him away."

Ali's knockout of Bonavena played over the opening credits of ABC's *Wide World Of Sports* for months. It was the only stoppage loss of Bonavena's career, but for millions of TV viewers, Bonavena represented the negative half of the show's popular slogan, "the agony of defeat."

By the mid-1970s, Bonavena's life was marked by automobile accidents, nightclub brawls, and court appearances. He and Dora separated. Hoping for another bout with Ali or Frazier, he bided his time with meaningless bouts in Italy and Hawaii. He'd become the sort of belly-up pug who would attract someone like Conforte.

The blossoming Nevada fight scene had convinced Conforte he could pimp fighters too. Bringing Bonavena to Reno to fight journeyman Billy Joiner was his first step toward becoming a promoter. The Mustang Ranch must've seemed like an oasis to Bonavena, for after beating Joiner, he leased a trailer nearby and had his mail delivered in care of the brothel. Bonavena even married one of Conforte's prostitutes, 20-year-old Marie Rebideaux (a.k.a. Cheryl Anne Rebideaux).

This was against Bonavena's usual code, for he'd told *The Washington Post* in 1974 that he didn't like girls over 18 and certainly wouldn't marry an American woman. "They are cold," he said. The union was annulled after 10 days when Rebideaux learned Bonavena was still legally married to Dora.

It was in this milieu of velveteen couches and red-flocked wallpaper that Bonavena spent the final months of his life. Sally Conforte, on record as Bonavena's new manager, was allegedly taking money from the Mustang to cover Bonavena's insatiable gambling habit. When Bonavena's body was found he reportedly had $6,161 in his pocket, which was claimed by a Reno casino where Bonavena had bounced a $7,000 check.

Three weeks after the shooting, Joe Conforte told the *Nevada State Journal* that Bonavena had bragged that he would soon take over the Mustang Ranch. "If he hadn't been killed, he was headed to my room to kill me," Conforte said. Years later, with the government pursuing him for charges including bankruptcy fraud, Conforte escaped to Brazil. He's still alive; Sally died in 1992. Brymer served only 15 months after pleading guilty to voluntary manslaughter.

In 1976, Argentine heavyweight Raul Gorosito told THE RING: "Ringo played the role of braggart. New, biggest, shining car, Havana cigar angled belligerently in his mouth, always walking as though the world strode with him. All that was a great lie, because the real Bonavena was only known by a few, and it's that memory he left us."

It's hard to predict how *Love Ranch* will affect Bonavena's odd legacy. Lou DiBella, one of the film's producers, told THE RING, "It's fictionalized. It's not totally biographical. We wanted to avoid legal issues, so names were changed. The fighter is called 'Armando Bruza.'"

"Bonavena was our main source, but there's a bit of Carlos Monzon in

Tens of thousands of mourners packed the streets in Buenos Aires for Bonavena's funeral in 1976 (above). Among those paying their respects was reigning WBA light heavyweight titleholder Victor Galindez (below).

there too," said Hackford, referring to another Argentine fighter with a stormy life. Screenwriter Mark Jacobson said, "I tried to get as much of Bonavena's character as possible. Whether it's all on screen, well, the writer is always the last to know."

Another change is that the film doesn't emphasize the fighter's loose cannon personality. "Bonavena definitely went farther than our character did," said Hackford. Instead, Mencheta portrays a more balanced, romantic figure. While Bonavena coming on like Antonio Banderas sounds like a stretch, Jacobson believes, "Bonavena *was* a romantic figure. He was a fun-loving guy from Argentina, with long hair, and he was charming enough to seduce the whorehouse owner's wife. That's what got him killed."

The shady circumstances surrounding Bonavena didn't prevent his funeral from being perhaps the biggest ever been given a fighter, with people throwing flowers from balconies as hundreds of cars and thousands of people followed the coffin from Luna Park Stadium all the way to La Chacarita Cemetery in Buenos Aires.

"He was a national hero," said Jacobson. "People from Argentina still respond to his name."

But in some ways, he'll always belong to Reno. ■

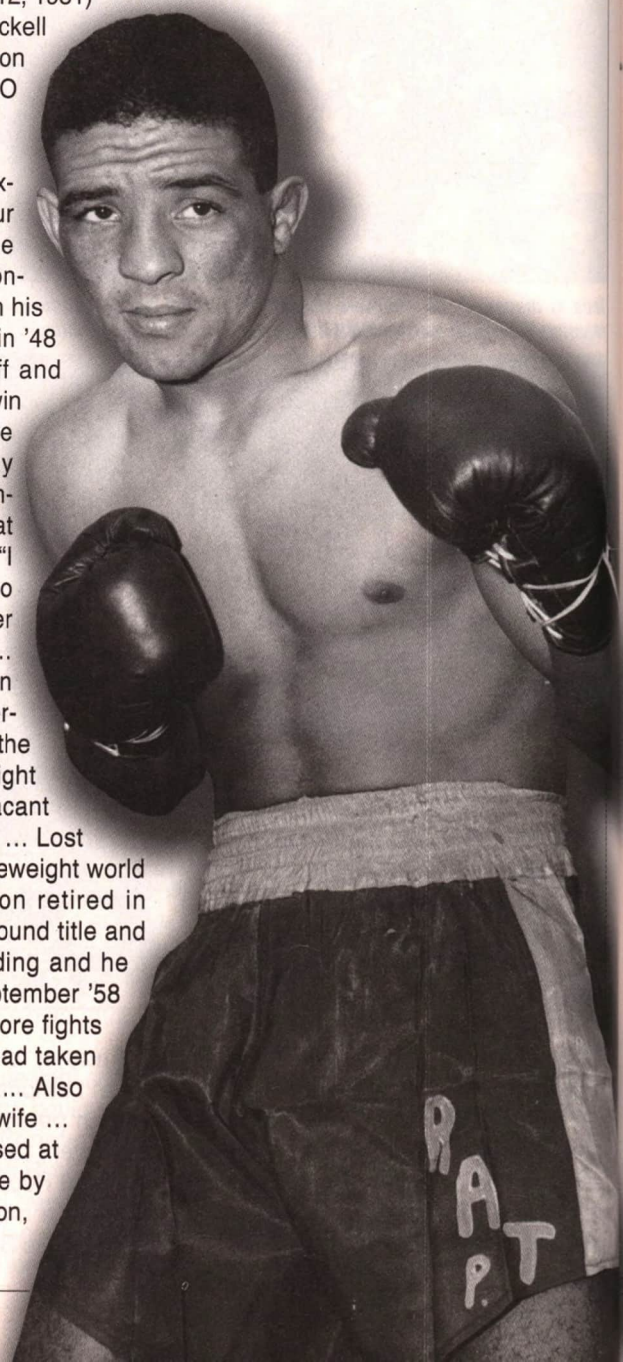
Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.

Hall of Fame Profile

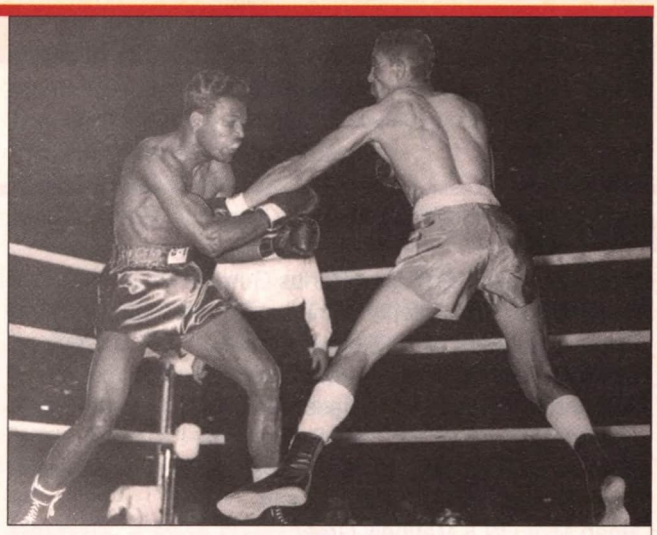
THE RING features a thumbnail biography of a ring great who has received the ultimate honor: induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York

Randy Turpin

Birthdate: June 7, 1928
Birthplace: Leamington, England
Date of Death: May 17, 1966
Nickname: The Leamington Licker
Weight Classes: Middleweight, Light Heavyweight
Professional Record: 66-8-1 (45)
Title Held: World Middleweight (July 10, 1951-September 12, 1951)
Best Performances: Ray Robinson (W 15), Don Cockell (KO 1), Charles Humez (W 15), Albert Finch (KO 5), Alex Buxton (KO 7, KO 2, KO 5), George Angelo (W 15), Luc Van Dam (KO 1), Jan du Bruin (KO 6)
Year of IBHOF Induction: 2001
Background: Followed older brother Dick Turpin into boxing at the age of nine and had already fought 100 amateur bouts by the time he was 15 ... At age 17 he became the youngest ever and first black boxer to win an ABA championship ... Turned pro September 1946 and went undefeated in his first 17 bouts before losses to Albert Finch and Jean Stock in '48 stalled his progress ... Returned after a five-month layoff and racked up 21 straight wins, including knockouts of Finch to win the British middleweight title and Luc Van Dam to capture the vacant European 160-pound crown ... Upset Sugar Ray Robinson in July '51 to win the world middleweight championship via 15-round decision as 18,000 fans whooped it up at Earl's Court in London ... "I have no alibi," said Robinson. "I was beaten by the better man" ... Contractually obligated to give Robinson a rematch, they fought again two months later in front of a record crowd of 61,370 at the Polo Grounds ... The fight was even going into the 10th round, but when Robinson suffered a dangerous eye cut he launched a desperate attack and stopped Turpin with just eight seconds left in the round ... Rebounded by winning the vacant British Empire light heavyweight in a June '52 bout with Don Cockell and the vacant Empire middleweight title against George Angelo in October ... Lost 15-round decision to Bobo Olson in October '53 for the middleweight world championship, which had become vacant when Robinson retired in December '52 ... Although Turpin regained the British 175-pound title and made two more successful defenses, his powers were fading and he retired after suffering a kayo loss to Yolande Pompey in September '58 ... Financial difficulties forced a return in '63, but after two more fights he quit for good in '64 ... High living and poor investments had taken all of his boxing money and he briefly turned to wrestling ... Also worked in a junkyard and ran a small transport café with his wife ... Dunned by the Inland Revenue for unpaid taxes and depressed at his fall from grace, the 37-year-old Turpin committed suicide by gunshot in 1966 ... Fifty years after his victory over Robinson, a statue in his honor was erected in Warwick.

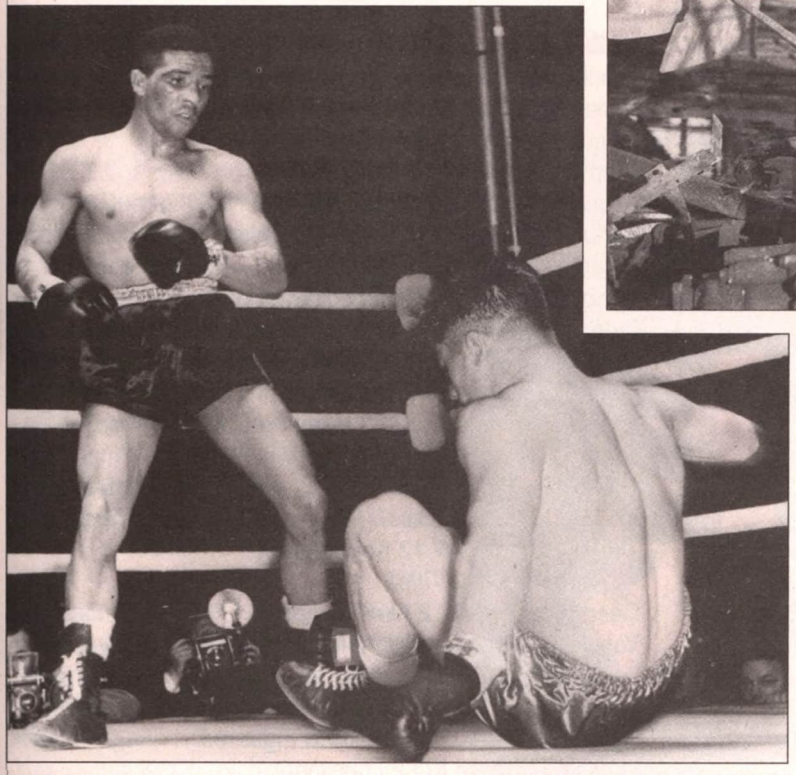


Editor Nat Fleischer presents Turpin with THE RING middleweight championship belt while the Englishman was in the United States training for the rematch with Robinson.



Turpin drives a left hand into Ray Robinson en route to a 15-round decision in one of the biggest upsets in middleweight history. Winning the world championship made Turpin an instant celebrity, but his reign was short-lived. Sugar Ray regained the title 64 days later.

Turpin at work in the junkyard where he earned his daily bread in 1959. A two-fight comeback in '63 and '64 went nowhere, and just over two years later the depressed ex-champion killed himself.



Don Cockell hits the floor in the third round of his 1952 bout with Turpin for the British light heavyweight title. Turpin won by TKO in the 11th round in front of a crowd of approximately 50,000 at London's White City Stadium.

[Summary]

Heavyweights

Vitali Klitschko KO 9 Juan Carlos Gomez
(*Retains WBA Title*)
Eddie Chambers W 10 Samuel Peter
Chris Arreola KO 4 Jameel McCline
Alexander Povetkin W 10 Jason Estrada
Hector Ferreyro W 12 Cisse Salif
Francesco Oianeta D 12 Albert Sosnowski
Tony Thompson KO 5 Adnan Serin
Brian Minto W 8 Matthew Greer
Thamsanqa Dube KO 8 Jake Els
Carl Davis KO 5 Moises Droz
Ran Nakash KO 7 Dave Brunelli
John Hopoate KO 4 Cliff Couser
Chazz Witherspoon KO 3 Travis Fulton
Alexander Ustinov KO 2 Byron Polley
Bowie Tupou KO 1 Marcus Rhode
Greg Kielsa KO 8 Arthur Cook

Cruiserweights

B.J. Flores W 10 Jose Luis Herrera
Chris Byrd KO 4 Mathias Sandow
Adrian Diaconu W 8 David Whittom
Roman Golovashchenko KO 3 Frank Roth
Laszlo Hubert KO 1 Norbert Sallai
Jozsef Nagy W 6 Zsolt Bodi

Light Heavyweights

Roy Jones KO 5 Omar Sheika
Edison Miranda KO 5 Joey Vegas
Elvir Muriqi W 10 Oleksandr Garashchenko
Shpetim Shala W 10 Lars Buchholz
Henry Mayes KO 10 Willie Williams

Super Middleweights

Librado Andrade W 12 Vitali Tsypko
Jeff Lacy W 10 Otis Griffin
Peter Manfredo Jr. KO 7 Walid Smichet
Jean Pascal KO 5 Pablo Zamora
Andre Dirrell KO 6 Derrick Findley
Tony Quigley KO 12 Tony Dodson
Bernard Donfack KO 12 Victor Dick
Andy Lee W 10 Alex Sipos
Kenny Anderson W 10 Nathan King
Evert Bravo W 10 Orlando Torre
Derek Edwards W 10 Anthony Greenidge

Middleweights

Paul Williams W 12 Winky Wright
Amin Asikainen W 8 Valentin Ochoa
Affif Belghecham W 10 Francois Bastient
Roman Karmazin KO 7 Antwun Echols
Javier Castillejo D 10 Moises Castro
Marcos Reyes W 12 Yory Boy Campas
Avtandil Khurtsidze W 12 Attila Kovacs
Jose Rodriguez W 10 Juan Montes De Oca
Tetsuya Suzuki W 10 Makoto Fuchigami
Andy Kolle KO 3 Anthony Bonsante
John Molina KO 2 Carlos Vinan
Manny Siaca KO 1 George Klinesmith
Gilberto Flores KO 5 Leonardo Mendez
Jim Rock W 10 Alessio Furlan

Junior Middleweights

Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. W 10 Luciano Cuello
Harry Yorgey KO 9 Ronald Hearns
Oney Valdez KO 12 Larry Sharpe
Lukas Konecny W 12 Jimmy Colas
David Lopez W 10 Ossie Duran
Adriano Cardarello W 10 Andrei Salakhutdzinau
Yuki Nonaka KO 10 Keiichi Arai
Luis Abregu W 10 Americo Sagania
Cedric Vitu KO 11 Gojko Knezevic

Welterweights

Vyacheslav Senchenko W 12 Yuriy Nuzhnenko
Sebastian Lujan W 12 Charlie Navarro
Selcuk Aydin W 12 Said Ouali
John O'Donnell W 12 Craig Watson
Saul Alvarez KO 10 Michel Rosales
Carlos Herrera KO 10 Jorge Miranda
Antonio Diaz W 10 Javier Castro
Henry Bruseles W 10 Mario Ramos
Diosbelys Hurtado W 12 Arturo Morua
Chris Van Heerden W 12 Welcome Ntshingila
Matthew Hatton KO 6 Ted Bami
Ricardo Williams Jr. KO 3 Harrison Cuello
Jorge Paez Jr. KO 3 Francisco Villanueva

Junior Welterweights

Timothy Bradley W 12 Kendall Holt
(Retains WBC Title)
Cesar Cuenca W 12 Alex De Jesus
Yosukezan Onodera W 10 Norio Kimura
Lenny Daws W 10 Peter McDonagh
Martin Coggi W Disq. 6 Norberto Acosta
Randall Bailey KO 4 Francisco Figueroa
Lucas Matthysse KO 2 Luis Jose
Danny Garcia W 8 Humberto Tapia
Rock Allen W 6 Adan Hernandez

Lightweights

Edwin Valero KO 2 Antonio Pitalua
(Wins Vacant WBC Title)
Michael Katsidis KO 7 Jesus Chavez
Vincente Escobedo W 10 Carlos Hernandez
Rolando Reyes KO 5 Julio Diaz
Oscar Pereyra W 11 Alejandro Gomez
John Watson W 10 Martin Gethin
Rashad Ganaway D 10 Jaime Sandoval
Lee Cook W 10 Shane Watson
Carlos Rodriguez KO 6 Alberto Santillan
Mark Davis W 8 Steve Gonzalez

Junior Lightweights

Humberto Soto KO 4 Antonio Davis
(Retains WBC Title)
Malcolm Klassen KO 7 Cassius Baloyi
(Wins IBF Title)
Roberto Arrieta KO 12 Matias Ferreyra
Zolani Marali W 12 Gamaliel Diaz
Ricky Burns KO 7 Michael Gomez
Harry Ramogoadi KO 4 Derry Mathews
Jorge Perez Tech. Draw 4 Juan Valdez

Featherweights

Fernando Beltran Jr. W 12 Miguel Roman
Yuriorkis Gamboa KO 10 Jose Rojas
Takalani Ndlovu W 12 Oscar Chauke
Oleg Yefimovych W 12 Osman Aktas
Feider Viloria W 11 Renan Acosta
Nikita Lukin W 10 Stanislav Merdov
Alex Miskirtchian W 10 Rudy Encarnacion
Jason Litzau KO 5 Phillip Payne

Junior Featherweights

Bernard Dunne KO 11 Ricardo Cordoba
Sod Looknongyangtoy W 12
Federico Catubay
Heriberto Ruiz W 12 Mauricio Martinez
Eric Morel W 10 Roberto Bonilla
Oscar Arraiga W 10 Rafael Gutierrez
Juan Hernandez KO 3 Ramon Pena
Olivier Lontchi KO 7 Cecilio Santos
Kazuyoshi Niki KO 6
Sangathit Sithsaithong
Somsak Sithchatchawal W 6 Lotlot Gaviola

Bantamweights

Fernando Montiel KO 3 Diego Silva
Gary Davis KO 7 Matthew Edmonds
Fahpetchnoi Sor Chitpattana KO 5
James Cocoh
Robert Migade KO 4 Maso Bitaza
Yuta Uetani KO 3 Yoichi Oguma
Thangthong Kiattaweesuk KO 2
Singo Kinaro

Junior Bantamweights

Nobuo Nashiro KO 8 Konosuke Tomiyama
Jose Lopez W 12 Pramuansak Posuwan
Jesus Jimenez KO 9 Jose Galletas
Hugo Cazares W 11 Roberto Vasquez
Juan Luis Hernandez W 10 Alejandro Martinez

Flyweights

Nonito Donaire KO 4 Raul Martinez
(Retains IBF Title)
Moruti Mthalane KO 3 Lehlohonolo Ramagole
Jordi Gallart W 10 Jose Lopez Bueno
Zolani Tete KO 1 Rexon Flores
Ruslee Samoh KO 1 Kong Sithsaithong

Junior Flyweights

Brian Viloria KO 11 Ulises Solis
(Wins IBF Title)
Edgar Sosa KO 4 Pornsawan Porpramkko
(Retains WBC Title)
Hekkie Budler W 12 Charitt Mukondeleli
Sonny Jaro KO 1 Eriberto Gejon

Strawweights

Raul Garcia KO 6 Ronald Barrera
(Retains IBF Title)
Oleydong Sithsamerchai W 6 Darmea Jordan
Jose Zuniga W 12 Ganigan Lopez
Yuji Kanemitsu KO 10 Masatate Tsuji
Etsuko Tada W 10 Cho-Rong Son
Denver Cuello KO 4 Hiroshi Matsumoto

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Flyweight Fernando Montiel sends Diego Silva into twilight

Arthur Abraham W 12 Lajuan Simon

Kiel, Germany: With a world middleweight title showdown against Kelly Pavlik tentatively set for November, the objectives for Abraham, 159½, Berlin, Germany, via Yerevan, Armenia, are to stay healthy and keep winning, neither of which were much in doubt against Simon, 157¼, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Victory by unanimous decision at Ostseehalle secured for the 29-year-old his 10th defense of the IBF middleweight belt.

If it were not for the possibility that, finally, he will get a shot at Pavlik, Abraham would have departed for the super middleweight division already. "The first thing I wanted was fried potatoes with olive oil," reflected Abraham, 29-0 (23). Prior to the fight he was reported to have had to abide by a rigid diet that meant skipping breakfast and eating less than a half-pound of steak and spaghetti for lunch and five milk-based protein bars for dinner. In the final two weeks, he had to drop 17½ pounds to make weight, so the prospect of remaining at middleweight is unappealing unless the fight with Pavlik is made.

"He's tough, he hits hard, and he's winning, that's the main thing. That's what makes it interesting for fight fans," Pavlik said in anticipation of the bout, though a contract has still to be agreed. "I'm excited. I think it's great, especially after I heard he was willing to come to the United States to fight. It's awesome. This is the fight people want to see."

Abraham was not near his best against the 6'1" Simon, who was taller by three inches and tried to keep the beltholder off him with his jab. But Abraham parried his blows and landed hard bodyshots in the second round, which he followed up in the third with a succession of powerful shots to the head. Simon retaliated in the fourth with a strong left hook, but Abraham was quickly in charge again, landing a series of heavy rights in round five.

The weight issue became a factor for Abraham in the middle rounds. The 30-year-old Simon, 21-1-2 (12), outworked him in the sixth and, although the Germany-based Armenian hit back strongly in the seventh when he rocked the American with a left cross and several more punches to the head, the challenger had another good round in the eighth when he hurt Abraham with a left to the chin. Abraham held on and managed to avoid being hit for the rest of the round.

Closing the ninth and 10th rounds strongly, Abraham put two more in the bag, though Simon remained steadfast in his determination to stay the course, which he achieved despite being nailed by several more heavy rights in the final round. Howard John Foster (England) and Ingo Barrabas (Germany) scored 117-110, while Valerie Dorsett (USA) saw it 118-109, all for Abraham. THE RING scored 118-109 for Abraham. The referee was Benjy Esteves Jr. of the United States.

"I was not happy with the performance, but it was important to win," Abraham said. "He was not a bad opponent and he took a lot of punches and fought bravely. Kelly Pavlik is the fight I look forward to most of all. That is my wish. I know I will win, I guarantee this. I will fight anyone anytime and any place and it's up to Pavlik to say yes to the challenge."

Promoter: **Sauerland Promotions**
(3-14-09)
Brian Doogan

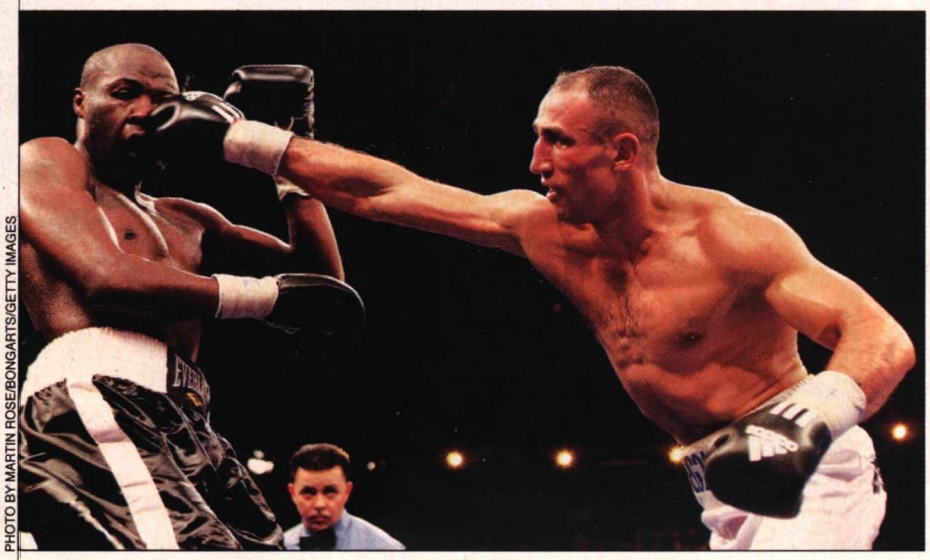


PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Abraham's straight right finds Simon's cheekbone

Giovanni Segura KO 4 Cesar Canchila

Mexicali, Mexico: Crowd-pleasing junior flyweight contenders Segura, 107½, and Canchila, 107½, picked up where they left off last July, when Canchila outpointed previously unbeaten Segura on the Antonio Margarito-Miguel Cotto undercard. Defense was again an afterthought, but this time Segura's firepower was too much for the tough Colombian at the Palenque del FEX.

Segura entered as THE RING's number four junior flyweight, while Canchila, who was making the first defense of the "interim" WBA junior flyweight belt he was handed for beating Segura, was ranked number three. It was apparent from the opening seconds that Segura, Bell Gardens, California, via Ciudad Altamirano, Mexico, had no intent of letting the longer-armed Canchila build the rhythm he established in their first encounter. Fighting out of a southpaw stance, he overwhelmed Canchila, 27-2 (21), with a torrent of shots, buzzing him in the opening

minute and trapping him against the ropes. Segura, 20-1-1 (16), then landed a hard right upstairs that left Canchila in a heap on the canvas.

Canchila, Cerete, Colombia, barely beat the count and appeared to be finished. Referee Julio Alvarado (Panama) allowed it to continue, and Canchila managed to get through the final seconds of the round on rubbery legs. He traded throughout a second round that was competitive until Segura landed a looping overhand left 30 seconds before the bell that sent Canchila down for a second time.

Canchila got up on steadier legs and again made it to the bell, setting the stage for a thrilling third session that should be a Round of the Year candidate. An increasingly reckless Segura, 26, battered his opponent early with combinations as Canchila, 27, struggled to counter off the ropes. Segura began to tire in the second half of the round, though, and Canchila came back with several hard shots to the head and body that left Segura with a swelled right eye at the end of the round.

The two continued trading in the fourth, with Segura landing the harder shots, while Canchila, his back to the ropes, tagged his opponent more often. Then things got bizarre. Segura buzzed Canchila with a hard shot to the jaw just before the bell. When the bell sounded, Alvarado failed to step between the two fighters, so Segura continued punching, further staggering his opponent. The timekeeper rang the bell several times before Alvarado finally jumped between the two and waved his arms.

It appeared that Alvarado was just signaling the end of the round, but after a few confusing moments, he raised Segura's hand to indicate he'd stopped the fight. The official time was 3:00, though it took Alvarado at least eight seconds after the bell to step in.

It was a wacky ending that's all the more reason for a rubber match. With the win, Segura also took Canchila's interim belt, which apparently puts him in line for a shot at full-time WBA beltholder Brahim Asloum.

Television: Azteca America
Promoters: Top Rank, Zanfer Promotions
(3-14-09)

Nehomar Cermeño W 12 Cristian Mijares

Torreon, Mexico: The curious case of Cristian Mijares continued with the Mexican's second straight loss as Cermeño, 118, ventured into the former unified junior bantamweight

[The Ring Fighter of the Month]

Paul Williams

It was just 14 months before his showdown with Winky Wright that Paul Williams was stunned by welterweight Carlos Quintana. It was the first loss for "The Punisher," and many observers were quick to write him off as an overhyped physical specimen who simply got lucky the previous summer in outpointing Antonio Margarito.

So much for that. Since his stinker against Quintana, Williams has roared back like a raging storm. He stopped Quintana in the first round of their rematch, knocked out the durable Verno Phillips, and in April put any doubts to rest with a one-sided 12-round middleweight win against Wright.

Williams was simply sensational against the former junior middleweight champ. The 6'2" southpaw used his incredible stamina and 82-inch reach to overwhelm Wright with 1,086 punches. Two of the judges gave him 11 rounds. He pitched a shutout on the third scorecard. Sure, Wright was 37 and coming off a 21-month layoff, but he'd never been taken apart like this. Williams' performance also raises the prospect of several fascinating matchups from 147 to 168 pounds. Though after the way he dominated Wright, Williams might need to scour even more divisions to find a name opponent who will actually fight him.

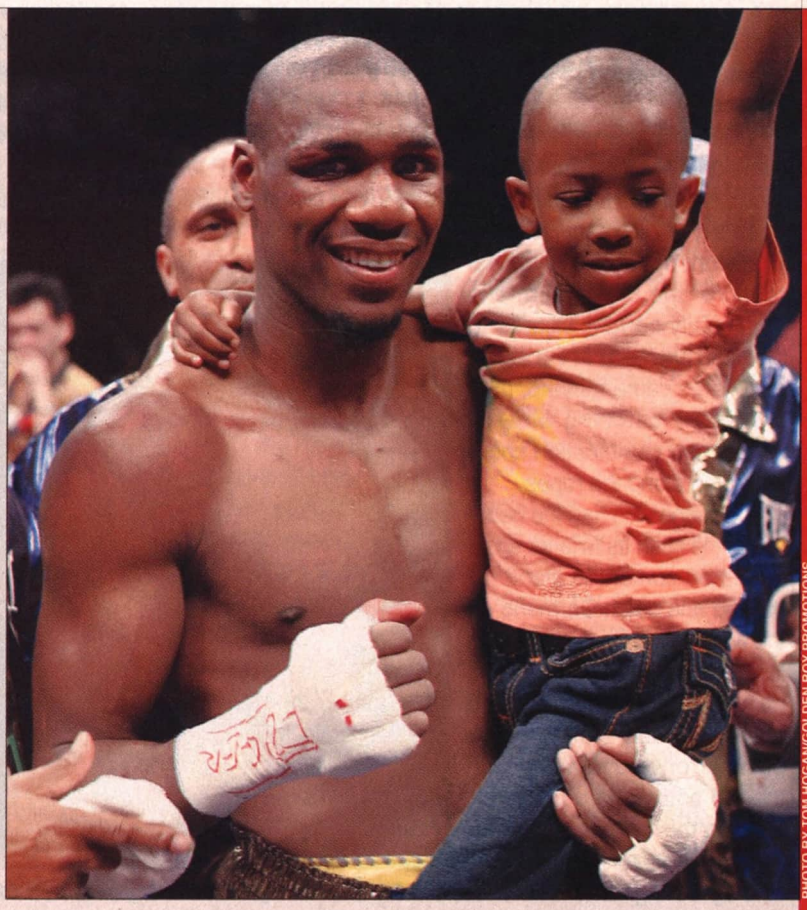


PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

beltholder's home country and pulled out a somewhat controversial split-decision upset at the Centennial Coliseum.

Last fall, Mijares, 118, was number seven on THE RING's pound-for-pound list after beating the likes of Jorge Arce, Alexander Munoz, and Jose Navarro. Then Vic Darchinyan crushed him in nine rounds last November, prompting the jump to bantamweight. Against the physical Cermeño, Mijares wasn't busy or accurate enough for two of the judges.

The 27-year-old resident of Gomez Palacio, Mexico, got off to a strong start in the opening two rounds. He constantly moved forward behind a stiff southpaw jab, and showed nice upper-body movement in slipping and countering the attacks of the 29-year-old Cermeño, Panama City, Panama, via Barcelona, Venezuela. It was obvious from the early going, though, that Cermeño's plan was to pound the body and rough up Mijares on the inside with his head and elbows.

Cermeño, a 2000 Olympian for Venezuela, picked up the pace and seemed to carry the third, when he effectively worked the body and drove Mijares, 36-5-2 (15), into a corner in the final minute with a hard combination. From there, Mijares' pace continued to slow, the upper-body movement decreased, and his hands steadily drifted lower to avoid punishment downstairs.

Mijares re-established his distance in a fourth round that he would have taken more convincingly had he been busier, a trend that continued throughout the fight. Cermeño, 17-0 (10), often flurried before the bell, which might have allowed him to swipe a few close rounds. He seemed to take the fifth with a higher work rate, though Mijares kept his opponent at a distance enough to seemingly carry the sixth and a close seventh.

Cermeño opened the eighth by hitting Mijares with two intentional shots to the kidneys. Referee Luis Pabon (Puerto Rico), a late sub for Guillermo Perez Pineda (Panama), gave Mijares a few moments to recover but didn't penalize Cermeño, who went on to enjoy his best round of the night. Cermeño continually caught Mijares to the head and body in the eighth as Mijares came forward, then closed by catching Mijares with a hard combination and a pounding along the ropes.

Cermeño also had the better of it in the ninth as Mijares again appeared content to stand his ground and catch Cermeño on the way inside. Sensing he was in trouble, Mijares picked up the pace and frustrated Cermeño in the 10th and 11th, when he pushed forward, leading with the jab and worked the body. Starting the 12th as if he were behind, Cermeño forced Mijares to play bullfighter in the first minute-and-a-half, but then took some shots late when he had little left in the tank.

Glenn Feldman (USA) had it 115-113 and Nelson Vazquez (Puerto Rico) scored it 116-112, both for Cermeño. Pete Podgorski (USA) had a drastically different tally of 117-111 for Mijares. THE RING saw it 115-113 for Mijares.

With the win, Cermeño moved into the number eight spot in THE RING's bantamweight rankings. He also picked up a vacant "interim" belt, which should put him in line to fight WBA beltholder Anselmo Moreno. However, a rematch with Mijares was reportedly set for June in Mexico City.

Promoter: **KO Entertainment**

(3-14-09)

Ola Afolabi KO 9 Enzo Maccarinelli

Manchester, England: Born in London, England, to Nigerian parents and trained by Freddie Roach at the Wild Card Boxing Gym in Hollywood, Afolabi, 199½, West Hills, California, threw off the veil of anonymity that had shrouded his career to date with a devastating knockout of Maccarinelli, 199¼, Swansea, Wales, at the MEN Arena to win the vacant "interim" WBO cruiserweight belt.

After being stopped in two rounds by fellow Briton David Haye for the world cruiserweight title in March 2008, Maccarinelli was looking to be rehabilitated. In his only bout in between he had stopped English heavyweight Mathew Ellis in two rounds last December. Afolabi was meant to be further fodder for the Welshman, but the 29-year-old proved to be resilient and he also carried considerable power. His career stagnated after he stopped Orlin Norris in 2005, but knocked out previously unbeaten Eric Fields in 2008, leading, ultimately, to this breakthrough against Maccarinelli.

"I hadn't boxed in 2½ years [before the Fields fight] and I was [42 pounds] overweight. They called me and I took the fight," Afolabi told Ron Lewis of *The London Times*. "It was

PHOTO BY ALEX LIVESEY/GETTY IMAGES

Afolabi's overhand right has a clear path to Maccarinelli's head

make or break. If I won, I kept going. If I lost, I retired. He threw a lot of heavy punches, wore himself, and I capitalized on it and knocked him out."

It was much the same scenario in this bout with the 28-year-old Maccarinelli, who outboxed Afolabi practically all night. But he never seemed to be as in control as the scorecards suggested, his unwillingness to really go for it a consequence perhaps of the bad night he suffered at the hands of Haye. Maccarinelli, 29-3 (22), also revealed a lack of preparation for the fight.

"I did have a lack of sparring for the fight; I hardly had any," he said. "But that alone would not make me exhausted after one round of boxing. I can't explain it. After the first round I was so tired and there has to be a reason for that. There was just nothing there."

Afolabi used his jab well in the opening round, but Maccarinelli fired back with a right hand and left hook and attacked the body to seize the initiative. He pinned Afolabi to the ropes in the second but gained no telling advantage, and in the third got nailed by a right hook that rocked him to his boots, only the bell saving him from an early disaster. It was a portent of things to come.

Maccarinelli was able to assert himself again in the fourth, if only because Afolabli apparently decided to take the round off, and he hurt his foe with a left hook in the sixth, by which time the America-based fighter seemed to be losing his desire. Several strong uppercuts further weakened him in the eighth, but he rebounded in the ninth, put Maccarinelli under pressure, and then swung forcefully with a right hook that connected flush on the jaw and floored the Welshman spectacularly. Maccarinelli made it to his feet before referee Terry O'Connor (England) completed the count, but, wisely, the bout was waved off at the 1:50 mark.

"People say I don't have power, but I have lots of power," said Afolabi, 14-1-3 (6). "He caught me with a good body-shot and I thought I couldn't take any more of those, so I concentrated on my defense for a bit and took him out. I knew I hurt him early on, but my style isn't to go in and take him out."

Television: **Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Frank Warren**
(3-14-09)
Brian Doogan

Roman Martinez KO 4 Nicky Cook

Manchester, England: With a powerpunching performance that proved too much for Cook, 130, Dagenham, England, 26-year-old Martinez, 129, Vega Baja, Puerto Rico, established himself as a force to be reckoned with in the junior lightweight division as he won the WBO super featherweight belt at the MEN Arena.

The 29-year-old Cook, 29-2 (16), made a positive start, penetrating Martinez' guard with an authoritative jab and a series of hard hooks with both hands. Martinez, 22-0-1 (13), retaliated confidently with his potent left hook. In the second round Cook attacked the body and landed a solid uppercut to the jaw before a left hook stunned the Puerto Rican and almost knocked him over. It was a high-tempo bout with plenty of to-and-fro action.

Cook continued to target the body in the third, but Martinez was countering dangerously, a pattern that extended into round four. Just as Cook might have thought he could be gaining the upper hand, however, Martinez struck conclusively. He hurt Cook when he beat him to the punch with a solid one-two to the jaw.

Cook spun out of the corner, but Martinez moved quickly and kept him on the ropes, where he landed a fierce left uppercut to the jaw and followed it up with another. Cook collapsed in a heap and did well to beat the count of English referee Dave Parris, but Martinez did not allow him off the hook. A powerful left hook to the jaw put Cook down again and, although he rose to his feet before the end of the count, referee Parris waved it over at the 2:20 mark.

Television: **Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Frank Warren**
(3-14-09)
Brian Doogan

Vitali Klitschko KO 9 Juan Carlos Gomez

Stuttgart, Germany: From the moment in the third round when Klitschko, 249¼, Kiev, Ukraine, found the range with his jab and began to drive powerful hooks into the head of Gomez, 230½, Hamburg, Germany, via La Habana, Cuba, the outcome of his first defense of the WBC heavyweight belt at Hanns-Martin-Schleyer Halle became a formality. Gomez was brave, his hands were quick, and he had success in the first couple of rounds, but, ultimately, he was outgunned by the bigger and better man.

Aesthetically, Klitschko will never be admired, but his awkwardness and overall effectiveness have translated into a record of 37-2 (36) over more than 12 years. His defeats have come from injuries, a torn rotator cuff in his left shoulder against Chris Byrd in 2000 and a laceration above his left eye against Lennox Lewis in 2003 that required 60 stitches. His ledger, as well as his 6'7½" frame, is formidable. Gomez had claimed to have more than held his own in sparring sessions 10 years ago when they were both promoted by Universum, but, whatever the reality, their relevance was peripheral when it came to the real thing because Gomez could not withstand the Ukrainian's heavy artillery.

The 35-year-old challenger started well, showing sufficient speed and ambition in the first two rounds to suggest that it might not be a straightforward night for the 37-year-old beltholder. Klitschko struggled to find his rhythm and his range and Gomez beat him to the punch, landing a left-right-left combination out of his southpaw stance at the bell and firing a couple of left hooks into Klitschko's face before the end of the first round.

There were ominous signs in the second round when Klitschko penetrated Gomez' guard with a straight right hand, but the Cuban exile maintained a sufficiently high work rate to take the round. It would be his last on anyone's scorecard.

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Referee Daniel Van de Wiele calls a halt to Klitschko vs. Gomez

From round three, Klitschko started to land his long jab and the big right hand, and the frequency with which he did so increased as the rounds went on. Gomez slowed discernibly as Klitschko's heavy blows took their toll. He stuck out his tongue at his tormentor when Klitschko landed another hard right in the fifth, but nobody was fooled. The crowd chanted "Klitsch-ko, Klitsch-ko," and he made the big breakthrough in the seventh round when he floored Gomez with a right hook and followed it with a left as Gomez fell to the floor. The challenger was floored by another hard right late in the round, but referee Daniel van de Viele (Belgium) did not rule it a knockdown, presumably because he did not see it when Klitschko fell over too.

Gomez, 44-2 (35), survived and made it through the eighth. Klitschko put him down again in round nine with a powerful right cross and, although Gomez rose to his feet, the referee had seen enough and he wisely waved it over at the 1:49 mark. Klitschko was ahead by 79-72 (twice) and 80-71 on the judges' scorecards at the end of eight rounds.

"I want to have significant fights and a bout with Oleg Maskaev (whom the WBC is threatening to force him to fight next) is not what the public wants to see," Klitschko said. "Nicolay Valuev or Ruslan Chagaev would be a better fight, particularly Valuev if he beats Chagaev first. I think people would like to see me and the 'Russian Giant.' For once, I would not be the big man in the ring."

Television: **ESPN Classic**
Promoter: **K2 Promotions**
(3-21-09)
Brian Doogan

Roy Jones Jr. KO 5 Omar Sheika

Pensacola, Florida: Jones Jr., 53-5 (39), Pensacola, Florida, was looking for an easy opponent after his last bout, the 12-round drubbing at the hands of then-light heavyweight champion Joe Calzaghe. He found a welcoming patsy in Omar Sheika, 27-9 (18), Paterson, New Jersey, a 32-year-old former super middleweight contender who had only fought once since 2005, and prior to that had lost six of nine bouts.

Jones, 173, impressed his hometown crowd of approximately 6,000 by dominating the action with snappy lead hooks and uppercuts. He was able to work without much concern for reprisal, for Sheika was ring-rusted and outgunned from the opening bell. Sheika, 175, landed a few blows in the third, but his efforts were short lived; by round's end Jones was whacking him with hooks and landing playful counters off the ropes. The bout began to feel like a gym session, with Jones toying with some hapless sparring partner. Jones occasionally stopped to wink at the crowd, and kept shrugging his shoulders as if the whole thing were just too easy for him.

At 1:45 of the fifth, with Sheika cut and absorbing too many punches, referee Tommy Kimmons (USA) stopped the bout. Sheika's handlers thought Kimmons' stoppage was hasty, but they probably thought Eight Bells could've won the Kentucky Derby last year with two shattered legs.

The bout was the main event of "March Badness," a modestly priced pay-per-view show promoted by Jones that featured both boxing and mixed martial arts. The event didn't do much to elevate boxing, martial arts, or anything else going on that night in the Pensacola Civic Center.

Jones, at 40, can still create the illusion of speed and athleticism, especially when he's fighting a shopworn, hittable opponent such as Sheika. For trivia buffs, this was Jones' first victory inside the distance since his 2002 TKO of Clinton Woods.

"Do you want me back? I'll be coming back," Jones said to the Pensacola faithful. He added, "I felt really good. I'm ready. With my father, Coach Merk [Alton Merckerson] and my team, I'm more comfortable."

Evidently, Jones has joined Evander Holyfield as the latest faded star with no intention of fading away.

Television: **Pay-Per-View**
Promoters: **Square Ring Promotions, Hirsch Borao Boxing**
(3-21-09)

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Jones has his way the Sheika

Bernard Dunne KO II Ricardo Cordoba

Dublin, Ireland: The day after Bernard Dunne was demolished in 86 seconds by Spaniard Kiko Martinez in August 2007, the bulldozers moved in to tear down The Point, scene of the Irish favorite's shocking downfall. Now the magnificent O2 Arena occupies the site and, in an aptly symbolic parallel, Dunne, headlining the first boxing show there, rebuilt his career with a thrilling upset win over Ricardo Cordoba to capture the WBA junior featherweight belt. To achieve his goal, he had to haul himself off the floor twice and endure cuts that required 10 stitches, then drop the defending titlist three times in the 11th round, leading Canadian referee Hubert Earle to wave it off with just one second left in the round.

Dunne, 121¾, Dublin, Ireland, was inspired by a capacity crowd of 9,000 to find the depths of courage and endeavor necessary to overcome the younger, faster, snappier-punching titleholder. Making his first defense, southpaw Cordoba, 121¼, Santa Marta, Panama, probably expected a cautious start from the 29-year-old Irishman, but was shocked by a perfectly judged left hook in the third round that sent him flying backward across the ring before going down for a count. It was Dunne's turn to experience real danger in the fifth, when he was dropped twice and was under heavy fire up to the bell. A panicky referee might have ended the local man's title hopes at this point, but Earle's judgment was proved correct when the challenger came out refreshed to take the next round.

The pulsating excitement continued unabated in this early candidate for Fight of the Year, with Dunne's punch salvos earning rapturous applause, even though Cordoba, 34-2-2 (21), who has failed to win on his four trips abroad, seemed to be landing more. Going into round 11, the three judges all had the Panamanian in a commanding lead, Ted Gimza (USA) by 95-92, Tom Miller (USA) by 96-91, and John Poturaj (USA) by 97-90. The Ring had it 95-94 for Cordoba.

Dunne, 28-1 (15), made the scoring immaterial by knocking Cordoba down three times for an automatic stoppage. As the hometown hero ran to the ropes to acknowledge the rapturous cheers, there was anxiety for several minutes as the 24-year-old Cordoba lay suppine while being attended by medics. Taken to hospital, one of his first visitors was Dunne, who was relieved to learn his victim was suffering nothing more serious than exhaustion and dehydration.

"The title is ours, it's totally ours," an ecstatic Dunne yelled after his hand was raised and he had embraced his trainer, Harry Hawkins, who had urged him to "treat every round as a new round" and not think about what had happened before or might happen later. The tactical plan worked a treat. "I had nothing against people saying they didn't think I could win, because we knew we were up against it," observed Dunne. "We knew he was an excellent boxer, an excellent mover, and a great combination puncher. But everything he was good at, I was good at too."

Promoter: **Brian Peters**
(3-21-09)
Patrick Myler

Eddie Chambers W 10 Samuel Peter

Los Angeles, California: If you long for the days when beefy heavyweights such as Tony Tubbs and Tim Witherspoon wafted about the ring like plump zeppelins, Eddie Chambers and Samuel Peter provided a touch of '80s nostalgia when they met at the Nokia Theatre in downtown Los Angeles. Chambers won the 10-round bout via majority decision, but the win was less of an announcement of Chambers' arrival than an example of the heavyweight division's mediocre state.

Peter, 30-3 (23), weighing a career-high 265, plodded forward, throwing one thudding punch at a time. Chambers, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, didn't give him any obvious openings, and Peter, Las Vegas, Nevada, via Akwaibom, Nigeria, couldn't create any. The fighter who once iced Jeremy Williams, nearly beat Wladimir Klitschko, stormed through Oleg Maskaev, outboxed James Toney, and rose from the canvas three times to beat Jameel McCline has vanished.

Chambers, 34-1 (18), flashed a good jab, picked off Peter's punches, and landed some nice combinations, but it's tempting to say he was only victorious because Peter seems to have lost all ambition, as evidenced by his ample body. The 28-year-old Peter, who entered as The Ring's sixth-ranked heavyweight, upped his aggression slightly in the last two rounds, but it was too little too late.

Chambers, a portly 223, seemed to grow in confidence as the bout progressed, but he injured his right hand early in the bout and relied almost solely on his jab. "Well, I'm definitely happy about the victory," Chambers told ESPN.com. "I'm a little disappointed in what I did totally as a whole, but happy about the jab." Chambers' promoter, Dan Goossen, believes Chambers is on the verge of a title bout. "There are not a lot of first-class heavyweights there today. And he proved it tonight that he was," Goossen said.

Whether he's first class or not remains to be seen, but Chambers is a fluid, crafty fighter with a sound defense. "I'm a smart fighter," the 27-year-old Chambers said. "Sometimes I think too much, and I think that's what made the fight closer on one of the scorecards."

Judge Max DeLuca (USA) saw the bout at 95-95, Marty Denkin (USA) saw it for Chambers, 95-94, while Ray Corona (USA) saw it overwhelmingly for Chambers 99-91. The scoring was a bit odd, but since the fight was so forgettable, there's no reason to scrutinize the math. Peter, of course, thought he had done enough to win. "I feel I pressed Chambers the entire fight, and I'll be back," Peter said.

The referee was Dr. James Jen-Kin (USA).

Television: **ESPN2**

Promoter: **Goossen Tutor, Duva Boxing, Score Promotions**

(3-28-09)

Timothy Bradley W 12 Kendall Holt

Montreal, Quebec: The 27-year-old powerhitting Holt of Paterson, New Jersey, defiantly thumped his chest at Bradley during the prefight instructions at center ring, brazenly asking him: "You ready for this heart?" Ultimately, it proved more talk than substance.

In the end, it was the 25-year old Bradley, 138½, who showed the bigger stones by peeling himself off the canvas after a counter left hook by Holt, 139¾, stretched him flat on his back two minutes into the first round. It marked the first time Bradley had been off his feet, and most fighters would have remained there for the full count after the bomb Holt delivered. But Bradley's superb conditioning and ring poise served to distinguish him as a different breed.

A defensively savvy Bradley instinctively bolted to his feet, but then cleared his head by calmly assuming a knee and allowing referee Michael Griffin (Canada) to register an eight-count. Thereafter, the Palm Springs, California, fighter ensured he would never field a similar punch again en route to an emphatic points win over Holt to take the minor WBO bauble in a bout billed as a championship unification match at Montreal's Bell Centre. Bradley, THE RING's top-ranked junior welter, was making the second defense of his WBC belt.

Holt, who was clearly bent on finding a knockout, had no alternative strategy as the fight got away from him in the middle rounds, while Bradley showed the same deft head movement that helped earn him his WBC strap from England's Junior Witter last year.

As the 5'6" Bradley increasingly dominated based on aggression, a busier work rate, and a concentrated body attack, Holt's offense seemed to correspondingly shut down with every counter he threw that was slipped or blocked.

By round four, the 5'7" Holt was showing frustration, exacerbated by a headbutt from his charging opponent that opened a small laceration above his left eye. Matters worsened in round seven after Holt took a left hook to the body that had had him backpedaling, falling into a defensive shell, and throwing few punches.

Holt's jab proved effective, but its erratic use was merely yet another invitation for Bradley to take rounds with his buzz-saw assault. Remarkably, there were a few detractors, some of whom ultimately scored the fight a near tossup, arguing that Bradley's punches were lighter and merited less on the scorecards than Holt's powershots. But in reality, up until round nine, which proved an even heat, Holt was simply outworked by a fighter of lesser power but equal offensive and superior defensive abilities.

The cards remained close, courtesy of a grazing right hand that saw a weaving Bradley catch the punch on the top of his head and touch down with a glove after losing balance. Technically, it was a knockdown, but there was little meaningful offense from Holt, 25-3 (13), up until the punch landed.

THE RING agreed with judges Jack Woodburn (Canada) and Richard DeCarufel (Canada), who saw it in favor of the

PHOTO BY HERBIE WHYNE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Bradley's right to the ribs brings a grimace to Holt's face

undefeated Bradley, 24-0 (11), all by scores of 115-111. Judge Raul Nieves (Puerto Rico) scored it 114-112 for Bradley.

In earning a unanimous decision for an outstanding technical display, Bradley may have cast himself in that unenviable category of paper champion who is too good, yet too obscure for a fighter of Ricky Hatton or Manny Pacquiao's stature to risk a loss against. That could be too bad for Bradley, but not for boxing fans who have little problem conjuring intriguing matchups for him, given the density of talent hovering around the 140-pound division.

Television: **Showtime**
Promoters: **Interbox, Top Rank, Gary Shaw Promotions**
(4-4-09)
Paul Salgado

Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. W 10 Luciano Cuello

Tijuana, Mexico: In the main event of the "Latin Fury" pay-per-view card, Chavez Jr., 154, Culiacan, Mexico, and Cuello, 154, Buenos Aires, Argentina, put on a show for the more than 16,000 fans in attendance at the Plaza de Toros, a Mexican bull ring located on the cliffs of the beaches of Tijuana.

At the start of the first, Cuello, 23-1 (10), came out aggressively despite the chants of "Chavez" throughout the arena. Chavez, 39-0-1 (29), responded with left hooks and rights to the body from a tight guard as Cuello tried to evaluate what he had in front of him. Before the round's end Cuello had intensified the pressure and momentarily forced Chavez into a corner with a series of punches as Chavez responded with beautifully placed bodyshots just outside the pocket.

During the second, the 6' Chavez used the ring space to score with a collection of bodyshots from the outside as he utilized lateral movement and solid technique to edge out the first two rounds. But Cuello turned up the heat in the third. He closed the distance and phonebooth warfare began as the two traded shots at close quarters, which was more favorable to Cuello, who suffered a height and reach deficit. Still, Chavez' bodywork seemed to slow down the determined Argentinean just a bit and Chavez stunned him with a left hook.

The bout was a see-saw affair the whole way and Cuello paid the price for exchanging with the naturally stronger Chavez. By the end of the fourth round he had suffered a cut on the top of his head and bled from a nose that appeared to be broken.

Since the bout was contested for something called the WBC Latino junior middleweight title, the Mexican-based organization used its dominion to implement its open-scoring policy, thus scores were announced after the fourth and eighth rounds that took a bit of the drama out of a bout that was very competitive. After the fourth, it was announced that Chavez was ahead by scores of 39-37 on all three judges' cards. After eight, fans were told that Chavez was leading 79-73, 78-74, and 77-75.

Despite the scores, the fight was hotly contested throughout. Chavez tried to create a little distance between the two in the middle rounds by using his jab, but the 24-year-old Cuello still found some success on the inside as a punch cut Chavez over the right eye in the seventh. The two fought the final two rounds at close quarters, going to war until the final bell. Judges Stephen Blea (USA) and Lou Filippo (USA) scored it close for Chavez with scores of 96-95 and 96-94, respectively, while Monique Rendon (Mexico) had the son of the Mexican legend in front by a more resounding 98-92.

Both fighters were covered in each other's blood by the end. "This was a good fight for me," Chavez said. "I learned a lot over these past 10 rounds. It was the first time that I was cut in a fight."

Chavez' promoter Bob Arum was optimistic about the 23-year-old's future. Chavez has been lobbying for a fight with Oscar De La Hoya until the "Golden Boy" announced his retirement. "We're going to look for a major opponent," said Arum, who mentioned John Duddy as a distinct possibility.

Vic Drakulich (USA) was the referee.

Television: **Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Top Rank, Promociones Zanfer**
(03-28-09)
Brent Matteo Alderson

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Chavez Jr. pierces Cuello's guard with an uppercut

Humberto Sosa KO 4 Antonio Davis

Tijuana, Mexico: In the co-featured bout on the "Latin Fury" pay-per-view card at Plaza de Toros, WBC junior lightweight beltholder Sosa looked sensational in stopping the usually durable Davis in four brutal rounds to successfully defend his belt for the first time.

Soto, 130, immediately attacked Davis, 130, from the opening bell with a diverse array of punches that included bodyshots, right hands, and hard left hooks. Soto, 47-7-2 (30), Los Mochis, Mexico, scored a knockdown in the first round with a grazing left hook that caught the 36-year-old off-balance. Davis, 26-5

(13), Atlanta, Georgia, had a solid second round and got in some right hands as he rushed in and landed wild shots while Soto countered effectively off the ropes.

Things got progressively worse for Davis in the third as he had to contend with a cut over his left eye that had occurred in the second. He held on the inside while occasionally landing a chopping right in a futile attempt to ward of the aggressive Mexican. In the fourth, Soto established distance between the two and landed a tremendous right following a jab that sent Davis crashing to the canvas. The American arose late in the count, and Soto followed up the onslaught with another one-two combo that dropped Davis for an eight-count for the second time in the round.

Davis stubbornly rose to his feet, but was rescued by referee Roberto Ramirez Jr. (Puerto Rico) when Soto stunned him with a volley of punches. The official time of the stoppage was 2:38 of round four. The victory was the third straight for Soto since his controversial decision loss to Francisco Lorenzo in June 2008, and emphatically establishes him as a dangerous opponent for any of the world's top 130- and 135-pound fighters. Prior to the loss, Davis hadn't been stopped since his fifth professional bout, having lasted the distance with Steve Luevano and Joan Guzman.

The 28-year old beltholder hopes to land a fight with another top-flight opponent, and a fight with Venezuelan juggernaut Edwin Valero, who is also promoted by Top Rank, could possibly happen later this year.

Television: **Pay-Per-View**
Promoters: **Top Rank, Promociones Zanfer**
(03-28-09)
Brent Matteo Alderson

Fernando Montiel KO 3 Diego Silva

Tijuana, Mexico: It seems as if every time Montiel is on the cusp of breaking into the pound-for-pound ranks, he flutters and loses a close decision. It first happened in 2003 when he lost a narrow verdict to a faded Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson on HBO, and then again in 2006 when he tried to move up and lost a split decision to Jhonny Gonzalez for the WBO bantamweight belt in a dreadful performance on an HBO *Boxing After Dark* telecast. It seems as if Montiel might have finally come into his own during the past year, however, with impressive knockouts of Luis Maldonado, Martin Castillo, and now Silva.

This bout at Plaza de Toros for the vacant "interim" WBO bantamweight belt saw Montiel, 118, easily dominate Silva, 118, Buenos Aires, Argentina. The 25-year-old Silva, 24-2-3 (12), came out aggressively in the first round, but it didn't take long for Montiel, 39-2-1 (29), Sinaloa, Mexico, to establish his range and drop the 25-year-old, who was fighting outside of South America for the first time, with a stiff jab in the second.

Silva recovered and charged out in the third, only to be dropped twice by counter left hooks, which prompted referee Raul Caiz (USA) to call a halt to the contest at 2:24 of the round as Silva lay motionless on the canvas. Afterward, Montiel commented, "As soon as I landed my left jab I knew he was done. Once I found my distance I knew I would be too strong for him."

The 30-year-old Montiel, who vacated the WBO 115-pound belt, feels he has matured into a natural 118-pounder. His string of impressive performances over the past year has catapulted his standing among the world's best fighters, and helped him move into the number 10 spot in THE RING's bantamweight rankings. It will be interesting to see if he can sustain this level of excellence this time around.

Television: **Pay-Per-View**
Promoters: **Top Rank**, **Promociones Zanfer**
(03-28-09)
Brent Matteo Alderson

Nobuo Nashiro KO 8 Konosuke Tomiyama

Osaka, Japan: WBA junior bantamweight beltholder Nashiro, 13-1 (8), 115, Osaka, Japan, came off the canvas in the first and sixth rounds to score a come-from-behind stoppage of compatriot Tomiyama, 18-2 (6), 115, a taller boxer-puncher from Tokyo, at 1:22 of the eighth round that left the spectators at Prefectural Gymnasium in a frenzy. It was Nashiro's second title defense.

The 27-year-old Nashiro, the prohibitive favorite, looked too nervous and tense in the first round to fulfill his prefight prediction of a quick kayo victory. He hit the canvas in the first

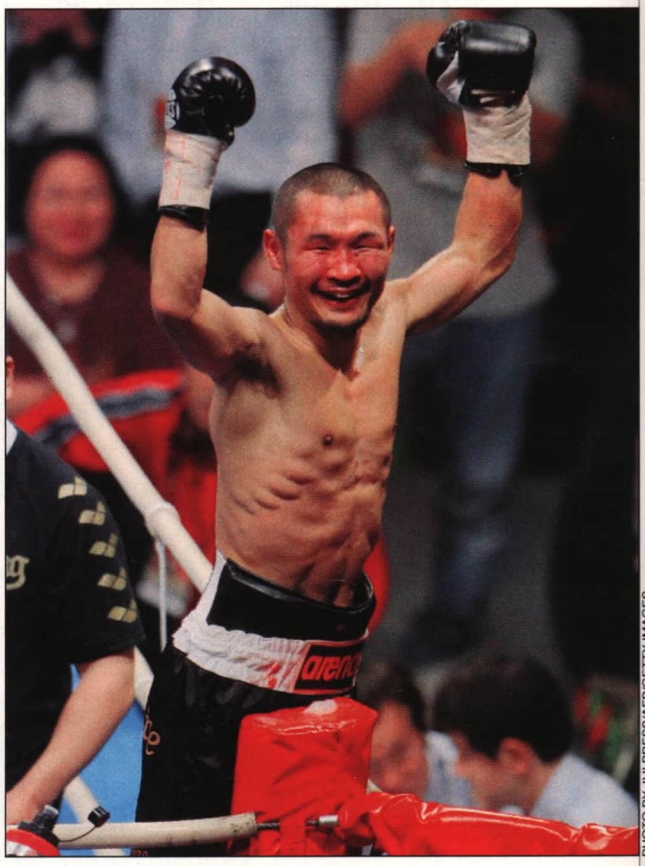


PHOTO BY JIJI PRESS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Nashiro exalts after stopping Tomiyama

while exchanging a roundhouse left hook with Tomiyama, an unheralded challenger whose left caught the titlist more quickly and with precision. It wasn't a heavy knockdown, but it was enough to deprive Nashiro of his composure. Had Tomiyama made an all-out attack to hurt Nashiro at that point, we might have seen a different result.

Nashiro still appeared shaky and unsteady in the second, and Tomiyama threw light but sharper combinations to win another round. The shorter, skull-shaven titleholder gradually regained his rhythm, distance, and timing as the contest progressed. Nashiro was in command in the third through fifth sessions, when he connected with solid left-right combinations to the challenger.

The 25-year-old Tomiyama, a flamboyant big mouth, seemed much sharper and swifter than usual, and floored Nashiro again with another left hook to the face midway through the sixth. Nashiro, too eager to score the knockout as predicted, forgot to weave, head slip, and duck, instead choosing to rush to Tomiyama, who made him pay with well-timed counters.

Though Nashiro got inside on his taller opponent in the seventh and landed left-right-left hook combinations to win back a point, the judges later proved to have had a matching tally of 66-65 in the challenger's favor after that round.

The dramatic eighth witnessed Nashiro explode with his signature right, which clearly hurt the youngster. Nashiro went all-out for the finish and rained a fusillade of punches, dropping Tomiyama onto the deck. The give-and-take process had the crowd on its feet. Tomiyama beat the count of referee Mark Nelson (USA), who allowed the challenger to go on. Nashiro quickly swarmed him, pinning him to the corner with a barrage of punches. Nelson made a wise halt as the helpless Tomiyama had no more energy to respond to the titleholder's onslaught.

Nashiro, after the unexpectedly tough defense, apologized for his unsatisfactory performance. "I'm sorry I was not to be able to show a better fight," he said in the ring afterward. "Tomiyama was stronger than I expected."

Hitoshi Watanabe, Tomiyama's manager, regretted his fighter's failure to attack the champ more in the opening session. "Had Tomiyama landed more good shots in the first, Nashiro would have been hurt and damaged," Watanabe said. "Then we might have seen another result."

It was more heart than technical excellence that Nashiro displayed in escaping Tomiyama's challenge. He was fortunate enough to keep the belt this time, but he will lose it if he doesn't improve his defensive skills in the future.

Promoter: **Mutoh Promotions**

(4-11-09)

Joe Koizumi

Paul Williams W 12 Winky Wright

Las Vegas, Nevada: There were no titles at stake in the 12-round bout at the Mandalay Bay Events Center between Williams and Wright, unless you count the unofficial title of "World's Most Avoided Fighter." The two talented middleweights turned to each other when neither could land a bigger fight elsewhere, and it was Williams who came away likely to still be avoided, while Wright suffered his most definitive defeat in nearly 15 years and might finally be targeted instead of ducked as a result.

It was a given coming in that windmill Williams would outwork Wright, so the onus was on the veteran to consistently score with the sharper, cleaner blows if he was going to persuade the judges. Wright, 159, St. Petersburg, Florida, did precisely that in the first round, landing one beautiful right hook followed by a left hand. Even so, an argument could be made to give Williams, 157, Aiken, South Carolina, the round, since CompuBox saw him throwing 104 punches and landing 21, compared to 14 of 42 for Wright.

Unfortunately for the 37-year-old Wright, who was coming off a 21-month layoff, the fact that it was possible to score the first round in his favor made it an aberration. The fifth was another good round for Wright, as Williams fought at a slower pace and Wright landed some jabs and got the better of the round's most noteworthy exchange. But otherwise, every round belonged to the longer, younger, faster, much busier Williams.

Williams, 27, flashed decent defense and a variety of offensive weapons, mixing it up with uppercuts, bodyshots, and his go-to straight left. The fight turned downright one-sided in the eighth, when "The Punisher" landed a right hook that helped him live up to his nickname and proceeded to let the combinations fly while Wright spent most of the round

PHOTO BY RAY KASPROWICZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Williams fires away during near-flawless performance against Wright

covering up. Williams seemed to stun Wright again in the ninth, and in the 10th Williams produced his high output of the fight to that point, 105 punches. And he was smiling all the way, which couldn't have helped Wright feel good about his chances.

Wright's eyes were fairly swollen by the 11th, and knowing he needed a knockout to win, he came out flinging big shots in a fiery exchange to open the 12th. But Wright has never been a puncher and his effort was in vain. Williams landed another vicious left uppercut before it was over, and the fighters embraced at the bell.

Judge Adalaide Byrd (USA) had it a shutout at 120-108, while Robert Hoyle (USA) and Jerry Roth (USA) both scored it 119-109, all for Williams. THE RING was a tad more generous to Wright, scoring it 118-110. The referee was Joe Cortez (USA).

"He was real tall and awkward, *long* arms," said Wright, 51-5-1 (25), who for the first time in a long time didn't spend his postfight interview after a loss or draw protesting the decision. "He throws a lot of punches. He's going to be tough for anybody to fight." Wright stated an intention to fight on, and he certainly didn't look like a shot fighter—just an overmatched one against this opponent.

"Winky came out to fight and he fought hard, I expected that," said Williams, 37-1 (27), respectfully. HBO's Larry Merchant told Williams he'd like to see him fight middleweight champ Kelly Pavlik or titlist Arthur Abraham next. "Me too," Williams responded.

Television: **HBO**
Promoters: **Goossen-Tutor Promotions, Golden Boy Promotions, Winky Promotions**
(4-11-09)

Chris Arreola KO 4 Jameel McCline

Las Vegas, Nevada: The tattoo-splattered, jiggly, 255-pound Arreola isn't much to look at. But as long as he keeps knocking opponents out, he makes an ugly heavyweight division look a whole lot better.

The undefeated Arreola was his usual offense-minded self in what looked on paper to be his stiffest test to date, a battle with veteran three-time title challenger McCline at the Mandalay Bay Events Center. It turned out not to be very stiff at all. Arreola endured a couple of scary moments due to defensive lapses, but it was an otherwise impressive showing that ended with McCline taking a 10-count from referee Tony Weeks (USA) at 2:01 of the fourth round.

The 38-year-old McCline, 271, West Palm Beach, Florida, had considered retiring after a November '08 win over Mike Mollo, but was lured back for this payday. It wasn't exactly short-notice—he had six weeks to prepare for the fight—but it still wasn't enough to get all the way into fighting shape after being out of the gym altogether for three months.

The soft-bodied Arreola, 28, Riverside, California, targeted the similarly soft body of McCline from the opening round. "The Nightmare" landed an excellent right hand to the chin that made McCline's knees dip for just a moment, then a two-punch combination to the body set the 6'6" veteran up for another beautiful right to the jaw.

The second round was even more one-sided, as the 6'3½" Arreola didn't need a jab—he just walked right in and pounded away. According to CompuBox, the younger man landed 20 of 50 shots in the round, compared to only 5 of 33 for McCline.

But the bout suddenly got interesting in the third, when "Big Time" discovered he could land his left hook and briefly transformed from a fighter collecting a paycheck to a fighter trying to win. Arreola scored with a punishing left uppercut-right cross combination, but McCline countered with a quick, flush hook that buckled the Californian's knees. Arreola came back with another nice left uppercut, but just before the bell, McCline loaded up and landed the heavy hook again. Arreola still landed more punches in the round, but it was arguably a round that could have been scored for the underdog.

Scoring became irrelevant, however, in the fourth. Arreola continued with the uppercut-cross combo that had been working, and the second time in the round that he employed it he followed with a second right cross that sent McCline to the floor. It looked like McCline could have gotten up but didn't particularly want to, and he finished Weeks' count on one knee.

"Jameel's a tough man, he took good punches and he gave good punches," said Arreola, 27-0 (24). When asked about his next move, THE RING's seventh-rated heavyweight said, "I want to be considered the best, so that means I have to fight the best, the Klitschko brothers."

"I think he'll be fighting for a title very soon," said McCline, 39-10-3 (23). McCline was asked if he thought Arreola could prevail in a title fight. "He just beat me. What right do I have to say, he's not going to do something if he just beat me?"

Television: **HBO**
Promoter: **Goossen-Tutor Promotions**
(4-11-09) ■

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

A stiff Arreola right stands McCline straight up

 (Continued from Page 26)

Davis graded Serrano at a C. "The reason why I gave him a C is he did try some things, but he still has a lot to learn," the trainer said. "He could have beaten him with one hand, all night, jabs, one-two, straight down the pipe. But he wanted to engage. He got excited that first round because of the knockdown."

A pupil of Naazim Richardson and Bernard Hopkins, the 42-year-old Davis has often had to take on the bad-cop role in Serrano's camp. When Serrano is hearing nothing but praise from those around him, Davis has tried to be the guy who says the things Serrano doesn't want to hear.

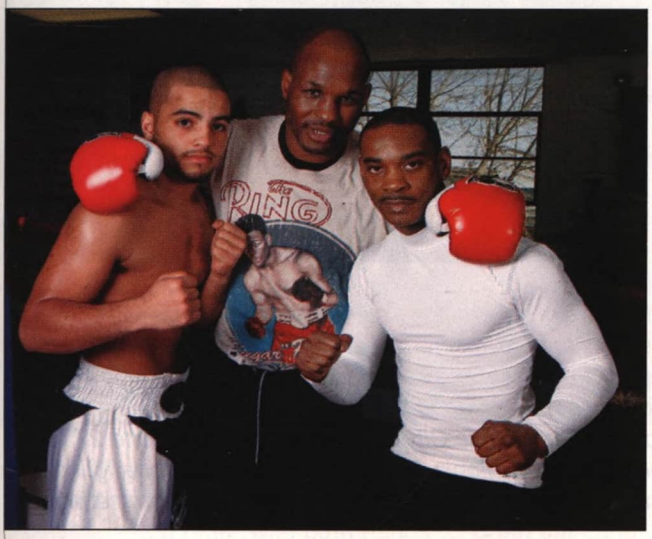
"Oh yeah, he's always telling me the bad stuff," Serrano said with a laugh. "It's good. Danny, he's a tough trainer. You always gotta be pushing yourself, because he's never happy."

Davis occasionally worked with Serrano during the fighter's amateur days. He took over head-trainer duties from Ramon before Serrano's fourth fight. Thus far, the transition has been a rewarding one for Serrano.

"Danny has helped me a lot," he said. "We switched it up. You get tired of doing the same thing in the gym, so when Danny came in, I started learning a little bit more stuff. It's good training. He knows a lot. He's been with the best."

The key point of emphasis from Davis has been: box more, slug less. Serrano is a self-described boxer-puncher, but he seems to enjoy the latter part of that tag a little more. He's still maturing physically, and despite the five first-round knockouts on his record, he lacks the one-punch pop of second cousin Kermit. Davis wants Serrano to use that quick jab and flashy hand speed to outbox opponents, which should make for a longer career.

"Why do you think Cotto is a better fighter now? Now he's a boxer," Davis said. "You have to become a boxer. You can't slug all the time, even though you're young and you can absorb it right now like a sponge. Eventually, that sponge is gonna wear out and you're gonna be shot."



Serrano poses with future Hall of Famer Bernard Hopkins and trainer Danny Davis at Andy Carr's Gym in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania. Davis believes it will be "another year or so" before his young pupil is ready to tackle the top names in his division.

Serrano has sparred with several notable Philadelphia-area fighters, including Danny Garcia, Mike Jones, Rock Allen, and Karl Dargan, along with Star Boxing stablemate Delvin Rodriguez.

To further Serrano's education and provide a change of scenery, Davis sent him to Freddie Roach's Wild Card Gym in Los Angeles in late-March to work with Manny Pacquiao. "I'm learning a lot from Pacquiao," Serrano said from Los Angeles.

Travel is nothing new for Serrano, who packed his bags frequently as an amateur. He went to Texas to win the 138-pound gold at the 2005 national and international Junior Olympics, and then picked up a bronze in England later that year at the Cadet World Championships.

That year's success changed Serrano's attitude toward boxing. "From there," he said, "I started to love it." He gave up running long distance for the track team at North Philly's Edison/Fareira High School (where he graduated in 2007) in order to focus his energies on punching.

Serrano moved up to the open division the following year, but began dropping bouts at big tournaments by close margins in the computerized scoring. Those losses slowly sullied Serrano's appetite for the amateur game. Even his wins didn't seem that significant anymore. "There was nothing to get excited about," he said.

So, after more than 100 amateur bouts, Serrano opted to go pro in October 2007, less than five months after his 18th birthday. "He just got tired of the amateur thing," advisor Phil Nochumson said. "Somehow Joe [DeGuardia] heard about him, and one thing led to another. That's sort of how it happened. It happened quickly."

But now that he's a pro, the young Serrano will be moved slowly. DeGuardia is planning to bring him back in May or June, possibly in an eight-round bout. In terms of a time frame for when Serrano will start meeting contenders and fighting for belts, the answers differ. DeGuardia says 12 to 18 months. Davis gives it "another year or so." Serrano's two-year estimate is the most conservative.

"We have to be careful," DeGuardia said. "He's still a baby. We're going to take our time and move him appropriately, but as you saw in his last fight, take the steps and fights that are going to challenge him.

"He's an exciting fighter. He likes to fight, to mix it up. He's good-looking. He's got a nice, easygoing personality. And he's young. So there's a lot of things we can work with."

A lot of things have certainly changed for Serrano since that day the "chubby" little eight-year-old wanted to quit the first time he got hit. ■

Don Stewart covers boxing for the Reading (Pennsylvania) Eagle and is a regular contributor to The Ring.

World Middleweight Championship

Kelly Pavlik

Main Event 12 Rounds

Sergio Mora

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Promoter Bob Arum miscalculated when he matched middleweight champion Kelly Pavlik with future Hall of Famer Bernard Hopkins in a catch-weight bout, and now he seems to be overcompensating by handling one of his more lucrative meal tickets with extreme caution. Pavlik's third defense and second comeback assignment will be against light-hitting Sergio Mora, a boxer whose best performances have been at junior middleweight.

Still, the 12-round world championship fight, which will be held at Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall on June 27, is an improvement over Pavlik's most recent match, against no-hoper Marco Antonio Rubio. Moreover, the Mora fight could turn out to be surprisingly competitive if Pavlik is still suffering from the lingering effects of the Hopkins hammering and "The Latin Snake" is at his very best.

Virtually all great fighters have come back from crushing defeats, and if Pavlik is going to be a great fighter, he'll beat Mora. But if the Hopkins' fight foreshadowed the future and Mora springs an upset, nobody will be able to accuse Arum of matching Pavlik too tough this time.

Kelly Pavlik

Sergio Mora

Record and World Rating

Pavlik delivers a right to Taylor's chin

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

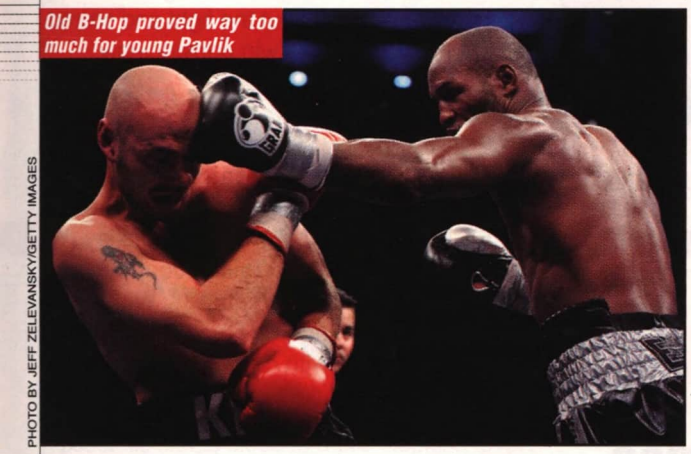
Is 35-1 with 31 knockouts ... Amateur career highlights include 1998 National Junior PAL championship, '98 National Junior Golden Gloves championship, and 1999 U.S. National Under-19 championship ... Turned pro in June 2000 ... Won vacant NABF middleweight title in October '05 and made two successful defenses ... Annexed world middleweight championship in September '07 and has made two successful defenses ... Lost undefeated record in October 2008 non-title bout ... Is recognized as world middleweight champion by THE RING.

Mora on the attack in title-winning fight with Forrest

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Is 21-1-1 with 5 knockouts ... Began boxing in informal neighborhood matches at age 15 ... Amateur career of roughly 60 sanctioned bouts ended in a loss to Jermain Taylor at the 2000 Olympic Trials ... Turned pro in August 2000 ... Became contestant in the first season of *The Contender* and won four consecutive bouts to win the million-dollar first-place prize ... Captured WBC 154-pound belt in June '07 ... Lost WBC title in first defense, less than three months later ... Ranked six at junior middleweight by THE RING.

Age and Physical Equipment



Old B-Hop proved way too much for young Pavlik

PHOTO BY JEFF ZELEVANSKY/GETTY IMAGES

Is 26 years old ... Stands 6'2" with a 75-inch reach ... Much tougher and stronger than his gangly physique indicates ... Hard hitter with both hands ... Stout chin and impressive recuperative powers ... Ordinary hand and foot speed ... Pale skin tends to cut and swell, even in easy bouts ... Always in top condition.

Mora en route to win over Rito Ruvalcaba

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Is 28 years old ... Stands 6' with a 73-inch each ... Athletically gifted ... Agile, lithe physique ... Fast hands and quick feet ... Excellent hand-eye coordination ... Powder puff puncher ... Sturdy chin ... Suffered serious cut over left eye in October 2005 bout with Peter Manfredo Jr. ... Struggled to make weight in most recent junior middle match.

Kelly Pavlik

Sergio Mora

Best Weapons

Pavlik outslugs Miranda

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Thunderous right hand and equally dangerous left hook have accounted for impressive knockout percentage ... Sets up powerpunches with good left jab ... Bangs the body effectively ... Steady pressure helps wear down most adversaries.

Ter-Meliksetian pulls away from Mora's right

PHOTO BY DANNY MOLOSHOK/ESPN

Elusive boxing skills are backed up with fast, straight punches that sting but seldom produce knockdowns ... Ability to frustrate opponents works in his favor and creates counter opportunities ... Wins with legs as much as with fists.

Previous Fight

Pummeled strangely passive Marco Antonio Rubio for a ridiculously easy TKO at the end of the ninth round in front of a deliriously happy hometown crowd at the Chevrolet Center in Youngstown, Ohio ... Nobody expected Rubio to win, but most figured the Mexican veteran, who was getting the opportunity of a lifetime, would do more than cower and absorb punches ... While a relatively easy assignment following the Bernard Hopkins debacle was understandable, this was ludicrous.

Alphabet title reign ended in his first defense when Vernon Forrest, the man he took the title from, regained the belt via unanimous 12-round decision by scores of 117-110, 118-108, 118-109 ... Needed two trips to the scales to make the division limit for the bout held at MGM Grand in Las Vegas ... Unlike in their first encounter, Forrest did not fade in the second half of the fight. Instead, he applied steady pressure throughout the fight and scored frequently with clean right hands to win convincingly.

Quality of Opposition

Grady Brewer (KO 2) only semi-significant name during lengthy buildup ... Stepped up to better competition with wins over Fulgencio Zuniga (KO 9), Bronco McKart (KO 6), and Jose Luis Zertuche (KO 8) ... Exciting seventh-round kayo of heavy-handed Edison Miranda led to title-winning bout with Jermain Taylor (KO 7) ... Easy first defense against Gary Lockett (KO 3) was followed by bubble-bursting non-title loss to Hopkins (L 12).

Best pre-*Contender* win came against previously unbeaten Les Ralston (W 8) ... *Contender* victims were Najai Turpin (W 5), Ishe Smith (W 5), Jesse Brinkley (W 7), and Peter Manfredo Jr. (W 7) ... Tallied controversial decision over Manfredo (W 8) in rematch ... Wins over Archak Ter-Meliksetian (KO 7) and Eric Regan (W 10) preceded surprising 10-round draw with clubfighter Elvin Ayala ... Has not fought since losing title.

Defense

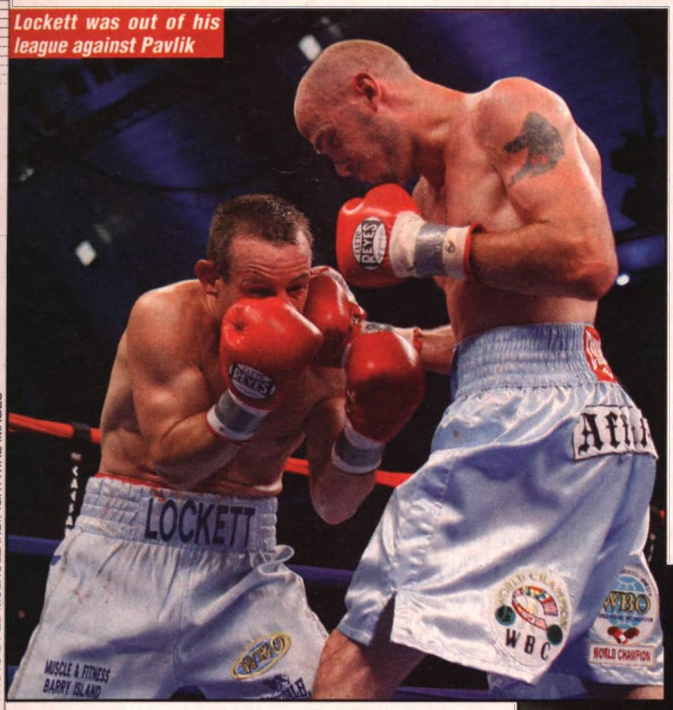
Fundamentally sound, but has generally relied on his two-fisted offense to keep opponents too busy to inflict much damage ... Above average chin has also helped ... Nicknamed "The Ghost" for his pasty skin color, not for his phantom-like defensive skills.

"The Latin Snake" more than lives up to his slippery nickname ... Excellent lateral movement, coupled with outstanding upper-body movement make him very hard to hit ... Also not reluctant to grab and hold if things get too hot and heavy.

Kelly Pavlik

Sergio Mora

Style



Lockett was out of his league against Pavlik

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Has boxed well at range on occasion, but appears far more comfortable moving forward, looking to inflict damage ... Adept at applying pressure and cutting down the ring ... Never hesitates to unload and is not averse to standing and trading ... Deadly finisher when his foe is hurt.

Jump in, jump out, and wiggle all about ... Slide to the left, slide to the right, spin away and repeat ... Punches in quick flurries rather than sustained output ... Accomplished counterpuncher ... Has shown courage and tenacity under pressure despite negative style.

Manfredo and Mora mix it up in rematch

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

The Questions

Has he recovered emotionally (and/or physically) from the prolonged beating inflicted by Hopkins? Could he underestimate Mora, thinking he's another Rubio? Will he become frustrated by Mora's defensive skills and reluctance to mix it up? Can he deliver the sort of emphatic victory needed to boost his status close to a pre-Hopkins level?

Will the move up from 154 to 160 pounds help or hinder? Does he have enough pop on his punches to keep Pavlik honest? Could the lack of a tune-up between the loss to Forrest and the title challenge have an adverse effect? Will he wilt under the sort of relentless pressure the champion applies?

The Outcome

It's a merry chase for a few rounds as Mora utilizes his legs and boxing skills to avoid most of Pavlik's big punches. The challenger even stops long enough to land a few sharp counter rights. But as the fight goes into the second half, Pavlik's aggression and heavy hands take over and he pulls away down the stretch to win a comprehensive decision.

The Ring Flashback

Through the years with "The Bible of Boxing"

December 1941

COVER STORY: Although the only picture on the cover is of light heavyweight champion Gus Lesnevich, there is not an article or column about him in the issue. Putting Lesnevich on the cover seems to have been an effort to make up for the fact he was not on the cover the previous issue, which carried a report of his 15-round decision over Tami Mauriello to capture the vacant 175-pound title. Lesnevich, however, is part of a theme piece titled "Outdoor Fights Made Three New Champions" by Ted Carroll, which made much of the fact that Lesnevich, welterweight Red Cochrane, and featherweight Chalky Wright all won world titles at outdoor venues during 1941.

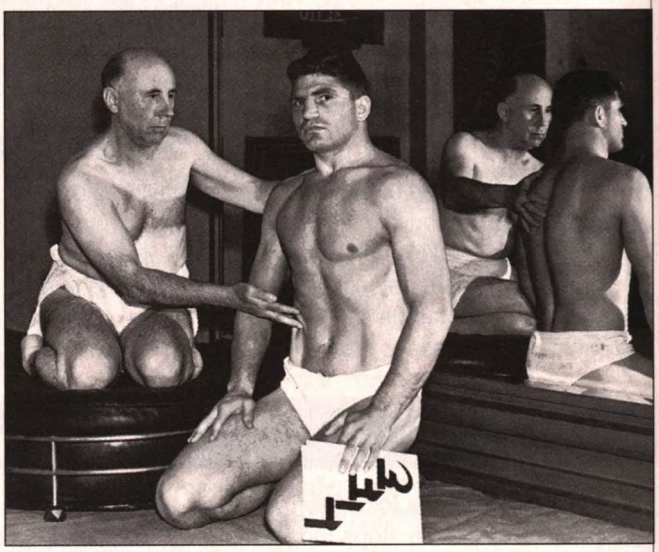
World Champions

(for the period ended October 10)
Heavyweight: Joe Louis
Light Heavyweight: Gus Lesnevich
Middleweight: vacant
Welterweight: Red Cochrane
Lightweight: Lew Jenkins
Featherweight: Chalky Wright
Bantamweight: Lou Salica
Flyweight: vacant

"Lou Nova: No Man Of Destiny" by Nat Fleischer covers Joe Louis' sixth-round knockout of Nova in defense of the heavyweight championship in front of 59,549 fans at New York's Polo Grounds. The fight had been a big disappointment for those who had fallen for all the hyperbole about Nova's "cosmic punch" and "dynamic stance," and Fleischer was scathing in his criticism.

"The bout also showed what bunk can be fed to the public in ballyhoo, hokum that the writers themselves don't believe, yet with which they hypnotize the fight fans to such extent that they flock in droves to contribute toward a gate of half a million dollars."

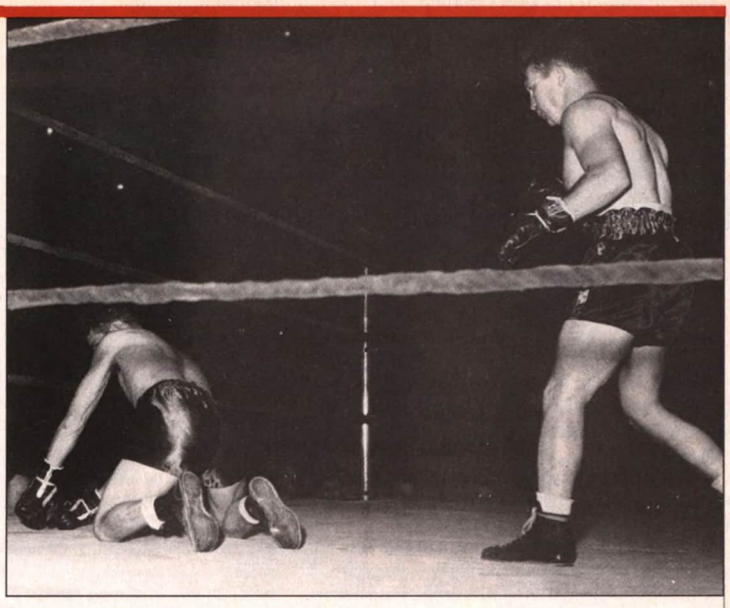
The ballyhoo and hokum that Fleischer refers to stemmed from Nova's claim that practicing yoga had allowed him to develop the aforementioned dynamic stance and cosmic punch, which was supposedly all he needed to knock Louis off his throne. Yoga was a bit of an oddity in the U.S. back in '41, so most people totally overlooked the fact that it is a form of meditation that promotes unity and peace, and has absolutely no martial overtones. It was from the mystical East and involved mind over matter, which was apparently good enough to hook the paying public into supporting what turned out to be a mismatch.



Yoga didn't help Nova against Louis

Once the opening bell rang, Nova absorbed a sustained beating from Louis, who knocked him down in the sixth round. Nova beat the count, but referee Arthur Donovan stopped the fight with just one second to go in the round.

Although he never had a chance against Louis, Nova wasn't the total fraud many painted him to be because of the cosmic punch nonsense. Prior to challenging Louis, he'd twice stopped Max Baer and decisioned Tommy Farr. Nova fought on until 1945, when he retired with a 49-9-5 (31) record and became an actor. He appeared in 20 movies, had a role in the long-running Broadway play *The Happiest Millionaire*, and also appeared in such TV shows as *77 Sunset Strip* and *Get Smart*. Nova died in 1991 at age 78.



Jenkins down during infamous bout with Cochrane

"New Punches" by George Tickell spins off of the Louis-Nova fight and the "cosmic punch" controversy to discus other novelty punches throughout the years, including Kid McCoy's "corkscrew" punch, George LaBlance's "pivot blow," and Bob Fitzsimmons' "solar plexus" punch. It was Fitzsimmons who best put the subject into its proper perspective when he said that the famous bodyshot he used to win the heavyweight title from Jim Corbett was nothing but a "bloody good belly punch."

"Nat Fleischer Says" is a contemptuous rebuke of lightweight champion Lew Jenkins, whose non-title bout with welterweight champ Red Cochrane at Madison Square Garden is described as the "most weird, unsatisfactory, uninteresting, listless performance seen by a New York crowd in many moons."

After the fight, Jenkins revealed that he had been injured in a motorcycle accident prior to the fight and had been unable to train. The excuse only increased Fleischer's ire, prompting him to write, "The quicker Lew Jenkins is shorn of his crown, the better for the sport."

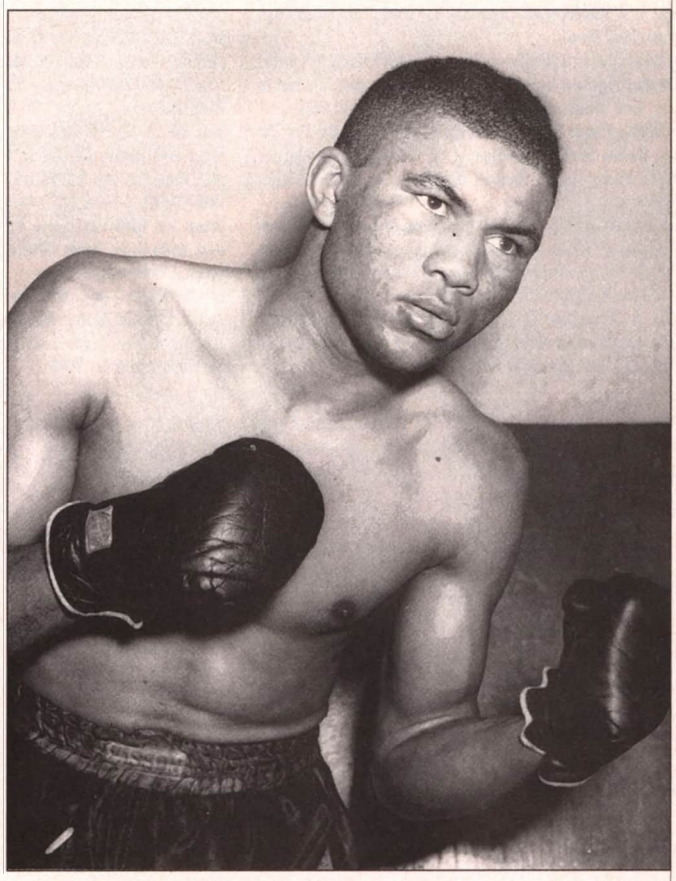
Fleischer got his wish when Jenkins lost the title to Sammy Angott in his next fight.

"Broadcast From New York" by Meyer Ackerman makes note of Ray Robinson's first appearance at Madison Square Garden, against Maxie Shapiro. The fight attracted 11,945 fans to see the "Harlem Trip Hammer" send "the Hebrew gamester to the canvas four times before referee Arthur Donovan called a halt to the one-sided proceedings" in the third round.

"In Chicago" by Gene Engel featured the demise of local lightweight Davey Day, who was counted out in the first round of his bout with future lightweight champion Bob Montgomery. "Near the close of the round, Montgomery sensed his opportunity and drove across a slashing left hook followed by a right cross, and the Chicago boy was counted out while on his face," wrote Engel.

Day, 62-9-4 (29), never fought again.

"South Jersey And Delaware Notes" by Archie Pirolli highlights a heavyweight bout between Lee Savold and local favorite Lou Brooks that attracted approximately 8,000 fans and created "the biggest gate in the history of Wilmington for any sports events, including football, baseball, or boxing." Savold knocked out Brooks in the sixth round. ■



Montgomery ended Day's career

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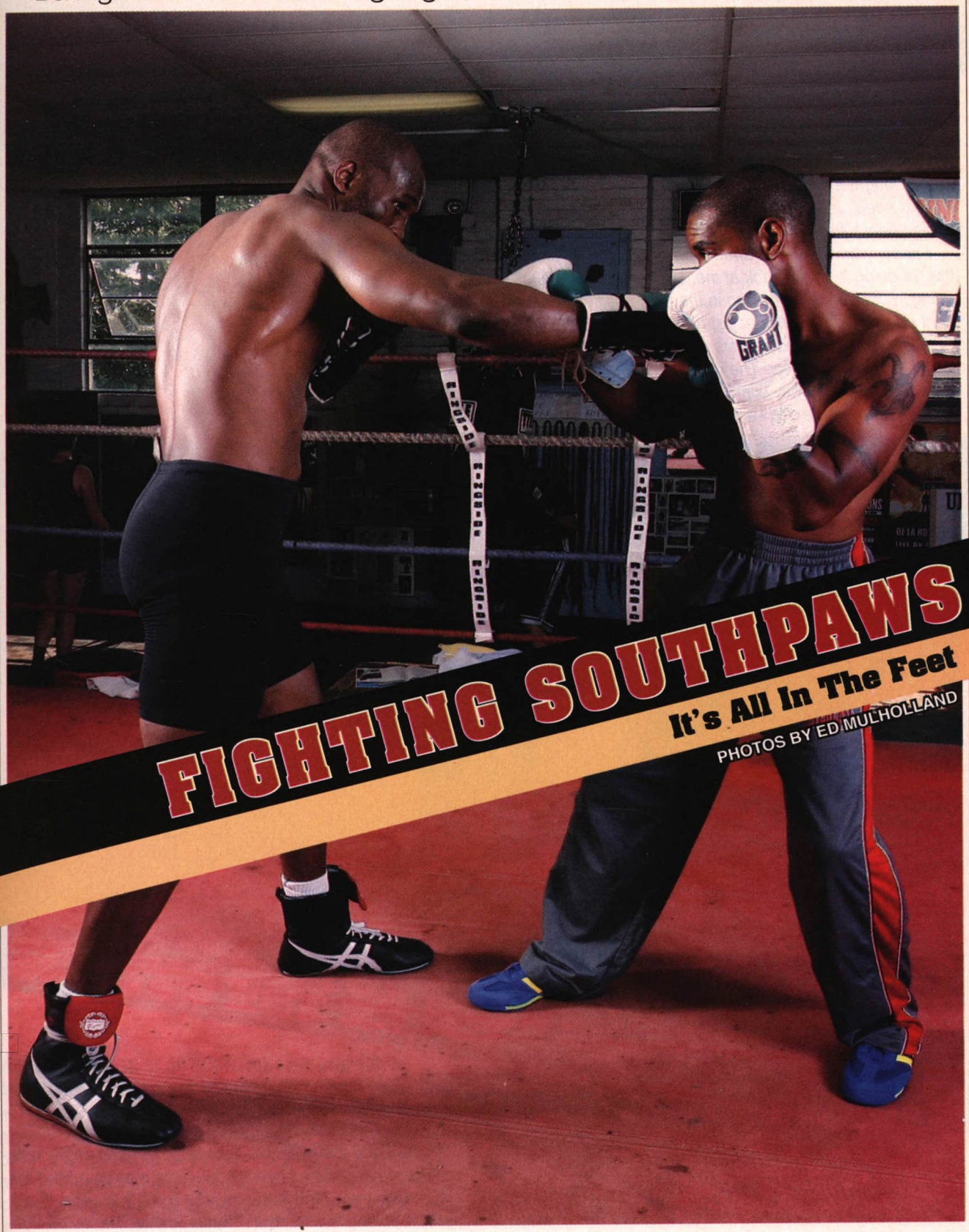
Boxing Lessons From A Living Legend

By Bernard Hopkins



FIGHTING SOUTHPAWS

It's All In The Feet

PHOTOS BY ED MULHOLLAND

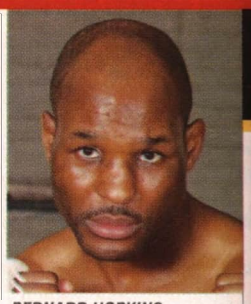
Left-handed fighters, or southpaws, drive most right-handed, or orthodox, fighters crazy. It's because they do everything backward. They jab with the right instead of the left. Their left foot isn't in front, their right foot is. You don't have to watch out for the straight right or the left hook, but rather the straight left and the right hook.

Most of the things you've gotten used to doing in the ring against right-handed fighters won't work against a left-handed guy unless you learn how to position yourself and have the discipline to stick to it throughout the fight.

I've fought a lot of good southpaws in my career—Winky Wright, Joe Calzaghe, Antonio Tarver, Robert Allen, John David Jackson, Keith Holmes, Syd Vanderpool. I beat all of them (yes, I still know I beat Calzaghe) because I know how to fight southpaws.

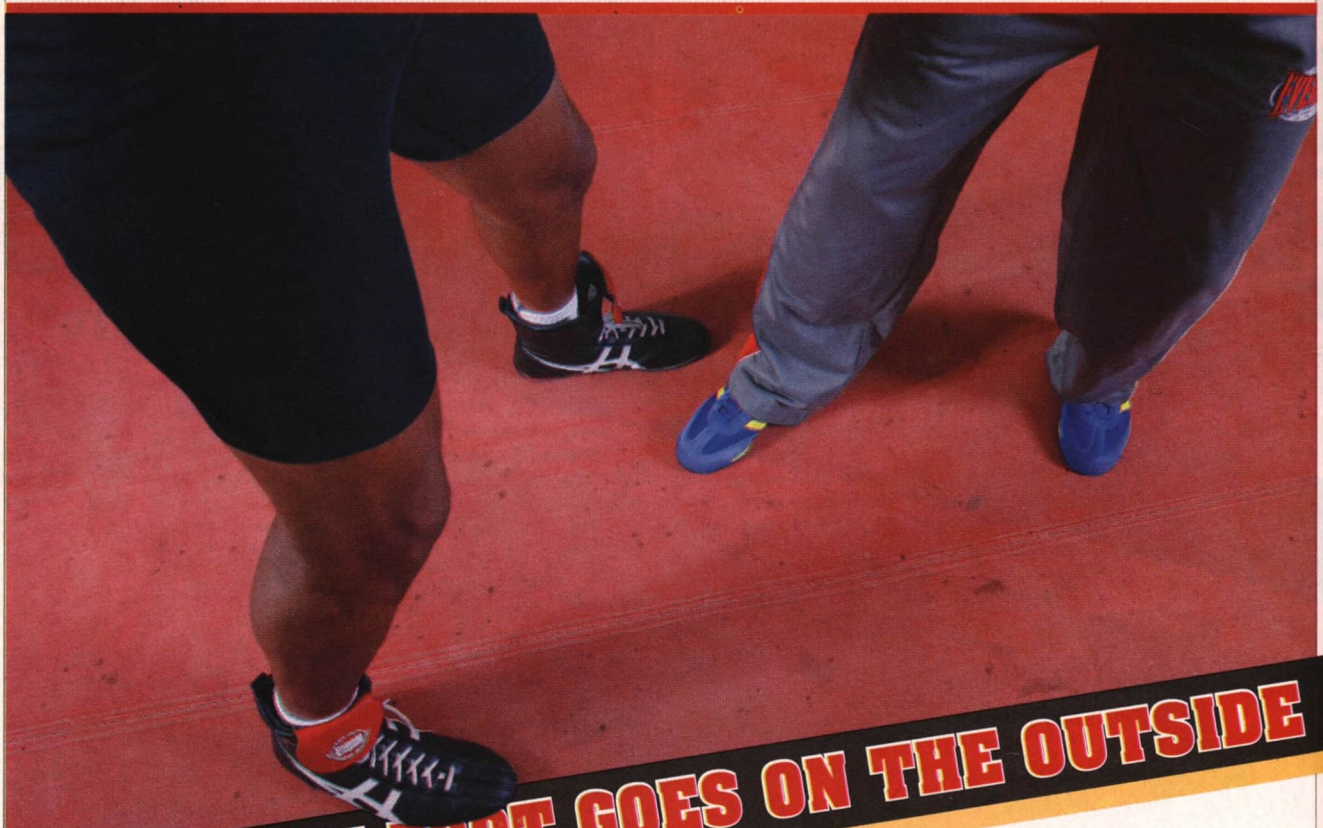
I know where my feet should be, I know what punches to throw and when, and I know what they're going to throw back at me. Like most other things in boxing, fighting southpaws is all about being in position, about being in the right position to do what you want to do and where your opponent can only do one thing: get hit.

A lot of right-handed fighters can't beat southpaws because they panic and forget where to step, forget to watch their feet. They don't have the discipline and the confidence to stick to the plan, and they get frustrated. They come out and forget everything they've been working on. You can know what to do—Danny Davis and I are about to show you—but you've got to have the discipline to do it.



BERNARD HOPKINS
Is the former middleweight and light heavyweight champion of the world.

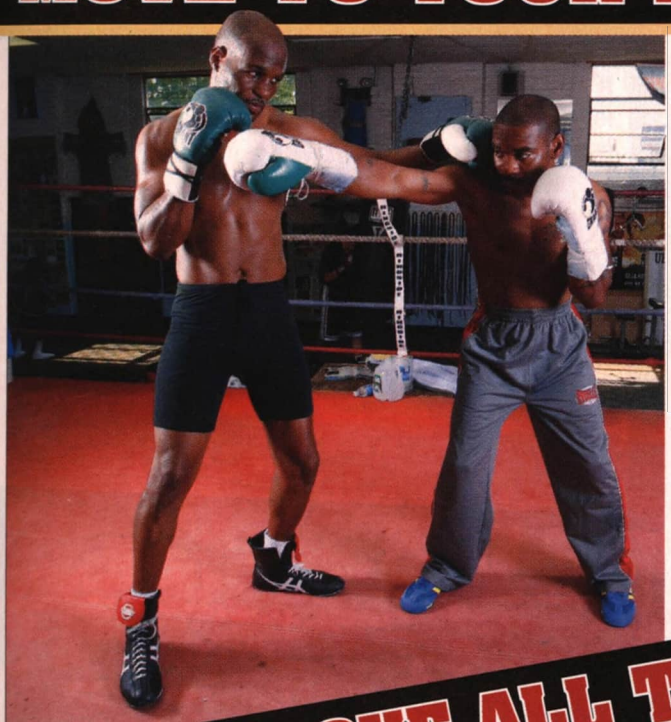
(All photos taken at Andy Carr's Gym in Upper Darby, PA)



YOUR LEFT FOOT GOES ON THE OUTSIDE

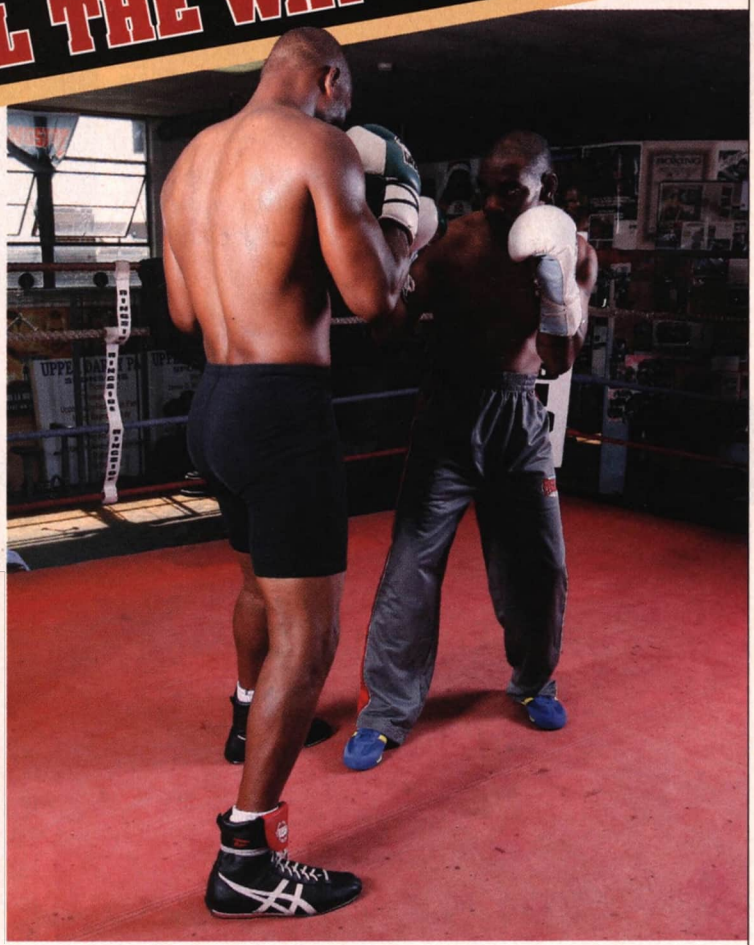
IT'S THE FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT RULE WHEN IT COMES TO FIGHTING A SOUTHPAW. Your left foot goes on the outside of his right (or lead) foot. This makes it hard for him to hit you and easy for you to hit him, and that's what boxing is all about. That's positioning.

MOVE TO YOUR LEFT



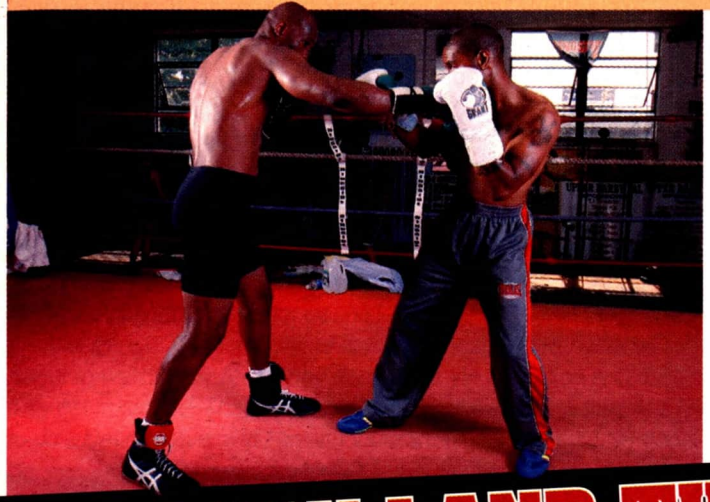
OF COURSE, YOUR OPPONENT WANTS TO GET HIS RIGHT FOOT ON THE OUTSIDE SO HE CAN GET YOU IN POSITION. How do you stop him from doing that? By never moving to your right, into range of his left hand, his power hand. You want to move to your left, unless you're backing him up in a straight line. If you're doing that, you're in business no matter how he's standing.

DON'T MOVE ALL THE WAY OVER



YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE SO FAR TO HIS LEFT THAT YOU'RE ALMOST BEHIND HIM. Look at the angle I create here, not by moving all the way over, but just by keeping my left foot outside his right foot. I've got a clear path for a right hand down the middle. He might be able to hit me with some right jabs, but he has to come across his body to hit me with the left, and that's not an effective punch.

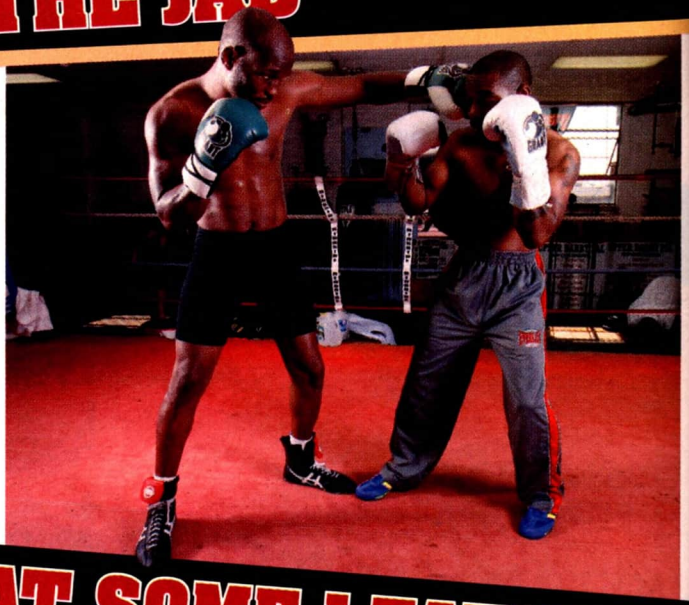
BEST WEAPON: STRAIGHT RIGHT



IF YOUR FEET ARE WHERE THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO BE, this is the punch you should be able to land against the southpaw. All night.

YOU CAN LAND THE JAB

A LOT OF RIGHT-HANDED FIGHTERS, EVEN IF THEY HAVE A GOOD JAB, don't feel right throwing it against a southpaw. It doesn't feel like it you can land it. And when you can't jab, you can't do anything else. You have to jab, even against a southpaw, and it can land, as mine does here. You just have to be in the right position to do it. Most of the time that's with your left foot on the outside and over his right hand.

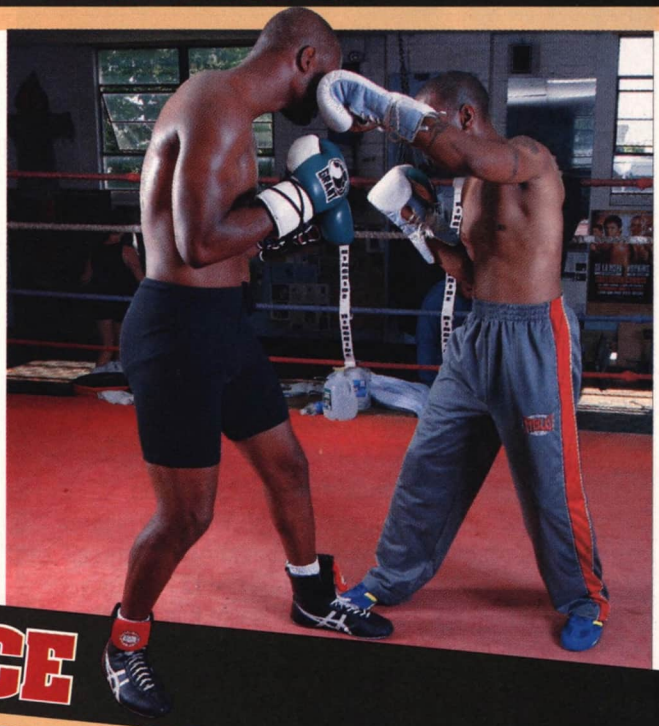


GET READY TO EAT SOME LEATHER

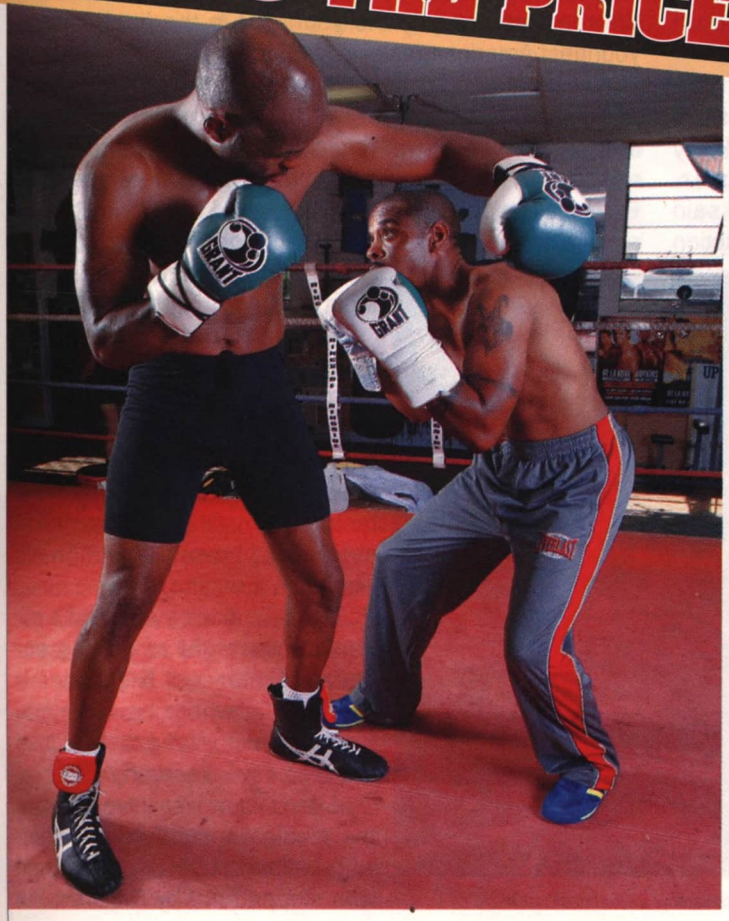
IF YOU LOOK DOWN AND SEE THIS, THAT'S WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN. First, because you're not supposed to be looking at your feet. Second, because when his right foot is on the outside, you're in line for his straight left and right hook.

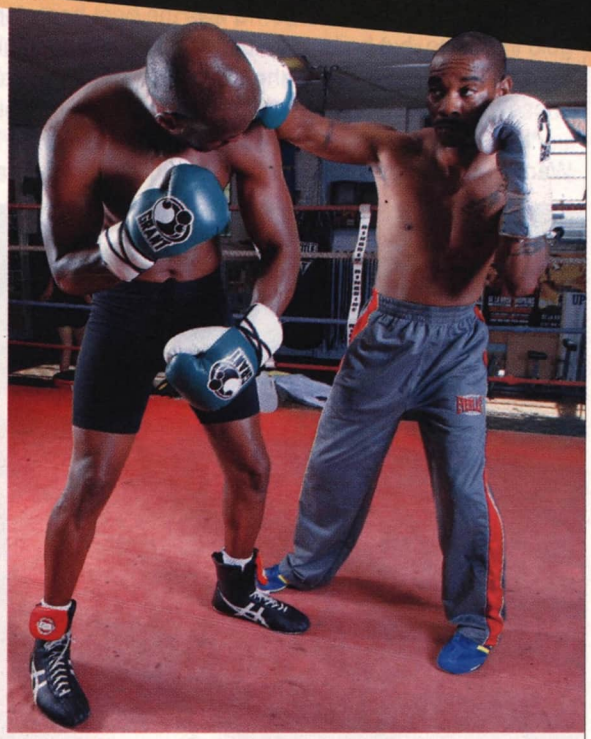
IMPROPER POSITIONING

THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS IF MY LEAD FOOT IS ON THE INSIDE where it's not supposed to be. This punch from Danny finds the target.



PAYING THE PRICE





EVEN WHEN YOU THROW A PUNCH THE RIGHT WAY, if your feet are in the wrong place against a southpaw, you're going to get tagged.

By Michael Rivest
PHOTOS COURTESY OF USA BOXING

U.S. Trio Seeks Redemption In London

First it was Michael Hunter, then Rau'shee Warren, and finally Raynell Williams. One by one, like modern knights rising to take some kind of oath, the three U.S. National Team boxers announced their decisions to remain amateur and aim for the 2012 Olympic Games in London. Rather than go pro as everybody expected, they will instead seek to avenge the 2008 Olympic Team's big disappointment in Beijing. You can almost hear the *Rocky* theme.

"We're gonna set things right," said Warren, 22. Super heavyweight Hunter, 20, and featherweight Williams, 20, are just as resolved. "There's unfinished business," said Williams. "It's kind of like destiny," echoed Hunter.

Noble ambitions aside, decisions like this are often driven by darker, more personal motives, a story's end that you just can't accept or a memory that's been waking you up in the middle of the night. That's the case here.

Cincinnati's Warren knew he was the best hope for USA gold in Beijing, but he lost to Korea's Lee Ok-sung in his first fight. He thought he was ahead on points and mistakenly chose to dance away and avoid contact in the final round.

"I have this memory of walking out of the ring," said Warren. "I let myself get confused by the crowd's reaction to me. I kept thinking, *To have waited this long and lose right away!* I couldn't get the picture out of my head."

Only his decision to write another chapter to the story in 2012 provided the release Warren needed. "I guess I really knew right then that I wouldn't just let it go and move on, that I'd have to go back and fix it," he said. "London is the only way."

Mike Stafford, who has been Warren's coach since he was six, knew how distressed his fighter was as soon as he returned from China. "Rau'shee came back and gave away all of his Olympic memorabilia to the kids in the gym," said Stafford. "He didn't keep one thing for himself."

London 2012 would be the flyweight's third Olympics, a first for any American boxer. In the 2004 Games in Athens, Warren was not only the youngest in the field, but the youngest American male at the Olympics.

Williams' unacceptable memory is tinged with anger. "If I'd really lost, I could have backed away from it. But I didn't; they took it from me," said the Cleveland boxer, referring to the judges' controversial decision in favor of France's Khedafi Djelkhir. Williams had convincingly beaten him at the 2007 World Championships and thought he'd done that again in Beijing. Most observers agreed.

Warren, Hunter, and Williams will try again in 2012

The difference is observers have long since left the memory in their rear-view mirrors. But not Williams. Only his decision to stay amateur and put the wind blowing toward London at his back has restored him. "It's still in my mind every day," he said, "but now it's like it has a reason."

The U.S. didn't even send a super heavyweight to Beijing because Hunter lost a qualifier in Guatemala, where he came into his match with Venezuela's Jose Payares a weakened boxer.

"I don't know how I even passed the medical exam," said Hunter, who believes his Olympic dream was stopped not by Payares, but

by a quesadilla from a Guatemalan street vendor. "For me," he said, "the saddest moment wasn't losing the decision; it was walking into the ring before the fight, and knowing I wasn't myself."

Hunter's mother is more philosophical. "Michael is always at this best the second time," she said. "It doesn't matter if it's passing his driver's test, his high school proficiency exam, or making the basketball team. He seems to reach deeper into himself when he's had time to think things over. He comes back stronger, more focused, the second time."

Of course, like anything in life, there are no guarantees that this trio will reach their dream of Olympic gold. The unexpected, questionable judging, and a bizarre scoring system could still undermine their dreams. And there is always the chance they will simpy be beaten by better fighters. But at this point those possibilities don't really matter to Hunter, Warren, and Williams. For them, it's just as much about ending a recurring nightmare as realizing their dreams.

New Direction For USA Boxing

Helping Michael Hunter, Rau'shee Warren, and Raynell Williams get ready for their next chance for Olympic gold in 2012 will be Patrick Borkowski, USA Boxing's first "high performance director."

"High performance," said Borkowski, "requires more than the traditional strength and conditioning. It calls for a unified system of preparation, a way to transition from being the best in the country to the best in the world."

Borkowski represents the first piece of a three-member coaching staff that will also include a yet-to-be selected new head coach to replace Dan Campbell (who many hold largely responsible for the USA's flameout in Beijing) and each Olympic boxer's hometown coach. In 2008, Olympic boxers were solely in Campbell's hands and separated from the coaches who in most cases had trained them for years, some since childhood.

Borkowski assumed his post in November 2008 after serving as the U.S. Olympic Committee's strength and conditioning coordinator since '02.

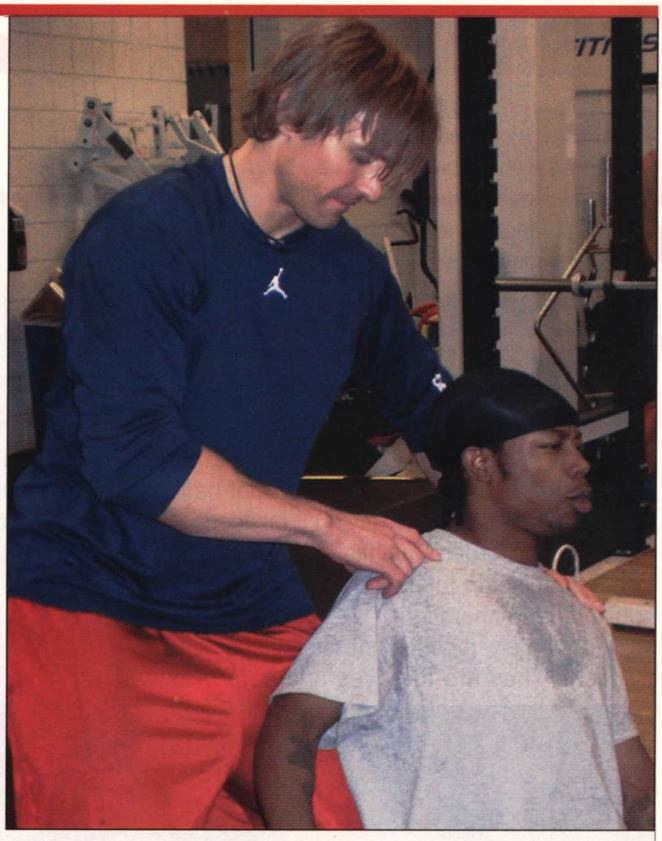
California Lifts Brief Ban Of Amateur Boxing

In response to reports that exclusive private clubs in the San Francisco area were staging shows where boxers' parents weren't allowed, but gambling and ring girls were, the California State Athletic Commission (CSAC) took the drastic step on March 23 of stopping all amateur boxing in the state. The suspension was lifted three weeks later after a formal hearing.

CSAC and USA Boxing representatives met on April 13 and 14 and agreed on a number of issues, such as allowing state inspectors to attend all amateur boxing events.

The two entities will also to work together to develop:

•A database that will allow electronic tracking of athlete's records and injuries



Borkowski works with Warren

•A medical evacuation process at sanctioned events

•Improved financial reports of events

USA Boxing will also provide documentation to the CSAC of local clinic events for coaches and officials.

"USA Boxing is very pleased about the outcome of the hearing," said USA Boxing CEO Jim Millman. "We are looking forward to getting events back on track throughout the state, so that athletes can once again have the opportunity to develop their abilities and compete."

Women's Boxing In 2012 Games Getting Closer

The International Boxing Federation (AIBA) has proposed to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) that women's boxing be included in the 2012 Olympic Games.

The IOC plans to decide on the matter when its executive board meets in Berlin on August 13. As it now stands, there are 26 Summer Olympic sports federations organizing to compete in London. Boxing is the only one without women participants. ■

Coming Events

June 8-13: U.S. Senior and Junior National Tournaments (male & female), Denver, Colorado

June 18-20: Native American Amateur Boxing National Championships, Lawrence, Kansas

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

Boxing's Unsung Heroes

When Shane Mosley's trainer, Naazim Richardson, caught Antonio Margarito's trainer, Javier Capetillo, illegally wrapping Margarito's hands, it ignited a firestorm of controversy that has resulted in both Capetillo and Margarito having their licenses revoked by the State of California. But little has been said or written about the commission inspector who failed to notice what was obvious to Richardson.

Fortunately, most commission inspectors are much more vigilant. They are the eyes and ears of the commission, underpaid and overworked but equal in importance to the referee and physicians when it comes to safety and fairness.

"What happened with Margarito is unbelievable," noted Tony Lato, chief inspector for the Nevada State Athletic Commission since 2001. "My Inspectors know what goes on the hand: gauze and medical tape *only*."

Lato's uncle, Carmine "The Caveman" Lato, was a club-fighter, and when he was a kid growing up in Rhode Island, Tony would attend the fights with his dad, who worked his uncle Carmine's corner.

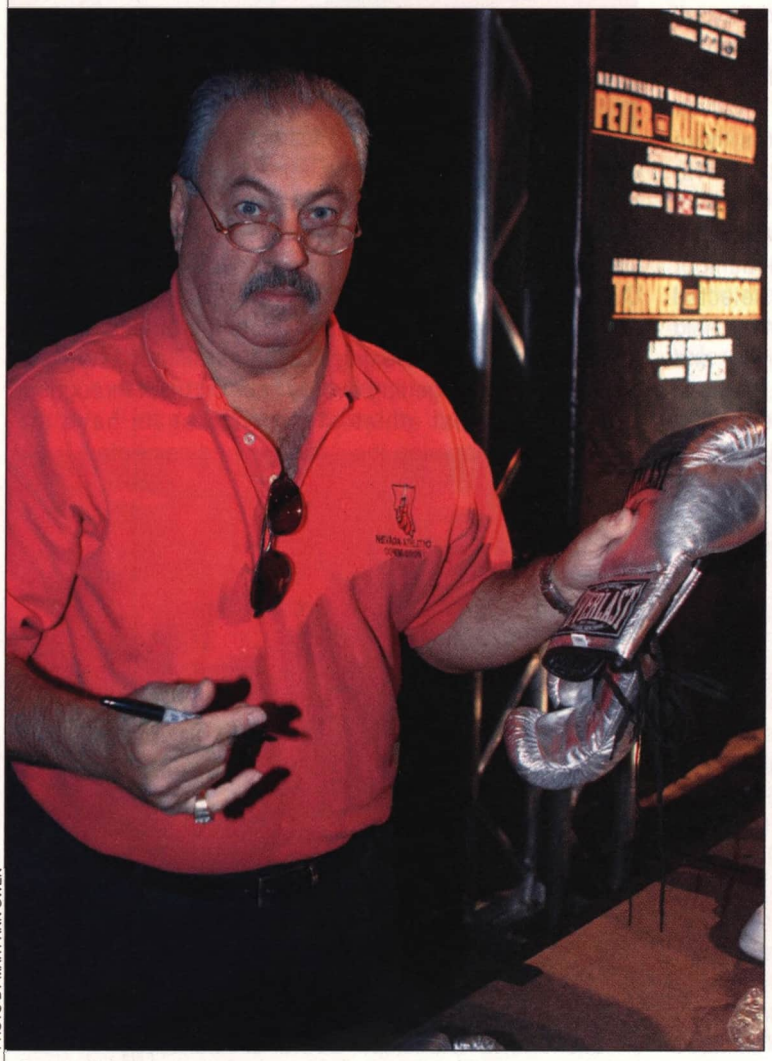


PHOTO BY MARY ANN OWEN

Nevada inspector Lato has many responsibilities

"I learned just how tough the sport is on an athlete," said Lato, a former baseball player, schoolteacher, and recently retired Las Vegas principal.

Lato moved to Nevada in 1982, where he attended fights at the Showboat, a casino boxing venue no longer in existence. In 1989 he was invited to become an inspector.

"Marc Ratner (former Nevada Executive Director) was the chief," said Lato. "I learned from Kenny Bayless and Glen Trowbridge. We had six inspectors then; now we have 28. The job is much more complicated now with all the drug-testing."

In Nevada, assigned inspectors arrive 30 minutes before the weigh-in. They license the cornermen and fighters. If there are championship fights, brand new gloves are laid on a table. The champion chooses his pair, then the challenger picks. Most of the time, to prevent any potential tampering, Lato takes the gloves home, and the fighters do not see them again until they are ready to lace them up.

On fight night, inspectors arrive 90 minutes before the first match. Six work a major event, while four are assigned to club shows. Before the card begins, an inspector examines the ropes and stability of the ring. Another makes certain the red and blue corners have stools, towels, and buckets.

From the moment the fighters arrive, inspectors are present. They check that each boxer has two mouthguards and a protective cup. During hand wrapping, an inspector closely observes the process from beginning to end. Each fighter can use a maximum of 15 feet of fresh gauze and six feet of tape. Once completed, the inspector signs the

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Lato worked Holyfield's corner the night "Fan Man" crash-landed at Caesars Palace

wraps. Then, after the gloves are laced up and the laces covered with tape, the inspector signs the tape.

An inspector remains with each boxer until his fight time and accompanies the fighter and cornermen into the ring. They then sit alongside the cornermen during the round and stand inside the ring between rounds to make certain no illegal substances are used.

"Initially, inspectors were just friends of the executive director or commissioners," said former Nevada ring physician Flip Homansky. "It was an opportunity for them to be at the fights as fans."

But even in the old days, some of the inspectors did take their job seriously.

"When I was an inspector at the old Showboat," recalled Bayless, "I noticed a fighter was protecting his side. I went over to Dr. Flip. He checked the fighter, noticed he was protecting his ribs, and stopped the fight. We sent the boxer to the emergency room only to find out he had a broken rib that punctured his spleen. Emergency surgery saved his life; he could have bled to death."

Inspectors need to communicate with the referee from the dressing room to the ring, during the fight, between rounds, and after the fight.

Unfortunately, inspectors are often the policemen of the sport—intervening in situations such as Mike Tyson's rampage after he bit Evander Holyfield's ear, and when Zab Judah threw a stool at ref Jay Nady when his 2001 fight against Kostya Tszyu was stopped.

Lato worked the night when James Jarrett Miller (alias "Fan Man") guided his powered paraglider into the Caesars Palace arena during the 1993 Holyfield-Riddick Bowe bout.

"I was in Holyfield's corner with Emanuel Steward," said Lato. "A time-out was called. I had the fighters covered, and we made certain they weren't worked on by their cornermen."

This established an important precedent. When a time-out is called for any reason, the cornermen cannot take advantage of the situation to advise their boxer or work on facial swelling or cuts.

When I was a ring physician, inspectors frequently alerted me to injuries and protected me from an angry crowd upset at a decision. They also frequently secured an area where I could treat an injured fighter when too many people cluttered the ring.

My most memorable inspector-related experience took place following a 2004 club show held in a small Laughlin, Nevada, tent. The card started late, so the fans had little else to do but drink. The main event was Jose Luis Castillo against Derrick Parks. The mismatch was stopped in the second round, but the drunken crowd wanted more action. About 50 guys rushed the ring, turned over the commission table, and were gunning for any official they could find. Lato and the rest of the inspectors protected us until police arrived. I left unscathed, except for beer-soaked clothing and hair.

Sadly, most commissions do not have the same level of inspector expertise as Nevada. In an effort to improve that situation, Lato hosts training seminars all over the U.S. and Canada.

"Training programs and experience are the way to avoid what happened with Margarito," he said. "I take exhibits such as gloves and wraps and ask inspectors to identify what is wrong. I also show a 90-minute film of unpredictable situations."

The most important thing an inspector can do is use common sense and maintain professionalism at all times. Yes, anyone can make a mistake, as occurred in the recent Margarito situation. But to ignore responsibility and not advance inspector training is an invitation for history to repeat itself and a recipe enticing serious injury. ■

By Jim Bagg

The Scales Of Injustice

The Baggthetic isn't what you'd call a "stats guy"—he can barely keep an accurate tally of the number of ex-wives he's accumulated—but here's one little statistic that he found compelling: You have to go all the way back to 1996 to find a RING Fight of the Year that took place in a weight class above junior welter. And the fight that won the award in '96, Evander Holyfield-Mike Tyson I, really wasn't the most entertaining fight of the year. It was the most significant and surprising, but in a year that gave us Arturo Gatti vs. Wilson Rodriguez and Marco Antonio Barrera vs. Kennedy McKinney, well, sorry, but this streak of the little guys providing the Fight of the Year should go back even farther.

There are two conclusions to be drawn, and they're both fairly obvious. First, the heavyweights suck. And second, the little guys, most of whom can't make a fraction of the money a top heavyweight makes to lumber and maul his way through a snoozefest, have been the ones saving our sport since Holyfield and Tyson started getting old.

Argue all you want about whether Wladimir Klitschko, Vitali Klitschko, and Lennox Lewis could have used their size to beat some of the great heavyweights of the past. (The Baggmeister says Joe Louis would have given away 50 pounds and still knocked 'em all silly, but that's a discussion for another day.) What you can't dispute is that these oversized heavyweights are boring. More boring than Ben Stein reading the dictionary. More boring than golf on the radio. More boring than the Baggmometer's sex life over the last two decades. We're talking pretty darned boring here.

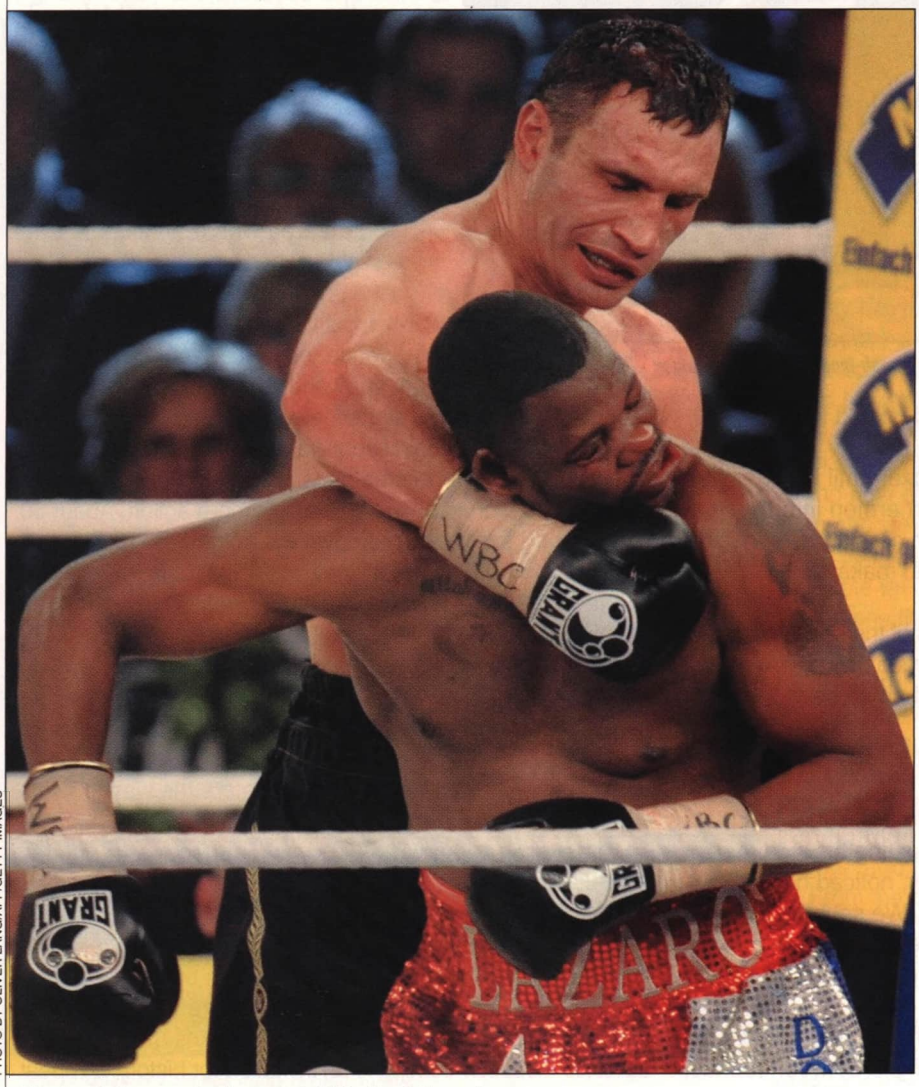


PHOTO BY OLIVER LANG/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

This is what passes for heavyweight "action" these days

A great jab may be where every successful boxer's offense begins. But if it's also where that offense ends, then that's bad news for the fans. Of course, that's an exaggeration. The Klitschkos do throw right hands, occasional left hooks, an uppercut once in a while, etc. When Wladimir fought Sultan Ibragimov, the punch counters even found one round where he threw multiple powershots. (Plus he shattered records in the robotic-arm-swat category.)

It's not just the best big men of the last decade who have caused eyelids around the world to lower. Lots of also-rans have stunk out their respective joints too. This past March gave us two important heavyweight bouts, Vitali Klitschko vs.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Marquez and Diaz: Incapable of a boring performance

Juan Carlos Gomez and Eddie Chambers vs. Sam Peter, but nothing exciting happened in either fight. Part of the reason: Every one of the fighters except for Klitschko entered the ring flabby. Gomez should be fighting at about 220 pounds, and instead the former cruiserweight king entered the most significant fight of his career a Downy-soft 230½. Chambers is at his most effective when he weighs 213-215 pounds, but he lugged a spare tire into the ring and weighed 223 against Peter. And Eater—*oops*, the Bagg-a-donuts means Peter—weighed in at a career-high 265, some 20 pounds over his ideal performance weight.

This is an extreme measure, but if the heavyweight division is going to regain a hint of respect, maybe it's time to start enforcing a weight limit. Unlike every other division, however, it won't be the same limit for every fighter. When the contract is signed for a fight, it will include a maximum weight for both boxers, assessed by some neutral third party, and if a fighter fails to make that weight, he sacrifices a percentage of his purse. If every heavyweight came into every fight in peak condition, if fans weren't turning on title fights and seeing guys with physiques straight out of Tony Tubbs' best-selling workout video "Eight-Minute Flabs," maybe we'd be able to again talk about a heavyweight "in action" without people assuming you mean it as one word.

But enough about the boring big men. There's a flip side to every coin (other than that two-headed coin the Baggdini used when he was a street hustler in the early-'70s), and that flip side is the thrilling little guys.

It's still very early in the year, but there are two clear front-runners for 2009's Fight of the Year and, surprise, surprise, the fighters involved each weigh about as much as one of Chris Arreola's breasts. Juan Manuel Marquez and Juan Diaz don't know how to show up out of shape or make boring fights, and their battle in Houston, Texas, met all expectations. It was heavy on action, and even appealed from an intellectual point of view, watching Marquez figure out, then whack out, the younger man.

And if you want to see the kind of burning desire that heavyweights only show when the dessert tray comes around, the recent fight between Bernard Dunne and Ricardo Cordoba in Dublin, Ireland, provided an exhibition of heart and will to win unlike anything that you can ever see in other sports. Dunne was knocked down twice in the fifth round. It sure looked to everyone like the fight was over. But the one guy who hadn't been convinced of that was the Irishman himself, and he hung around to win by 11th-round knockout in a fight that was out of reach on the scorecards.

The frustrating thing about the abysmal lack of entertainment value coming out of the modern heavyweight division is that the Klitschkos have shown glimpses of Dunne's fighting spirit. Wladimir got off the canvas three times to beat Peter. Vitali's face looked like a corned beef special and he never stopped slugging against Lewis. They both *can* entertain. But like most of the world's better heavyweights ("better" being a more accurate term than "good"), they choose not to.

Maybe Wladimir vs. David Haye will be the start of a new, more fan-friendly heavyweight era, but more likely we'll see the bigger man use his height and reach, play it safe, and extend our current era. It only takes two words to sum up the way that Bagguette feels about that possibility: That sucks.

But at least we have the little guys. From welter on down, boxing is as entertaining as it's ever been. Maybe size matters—just not in the way we've always thought. Computers, cell phones, and my 401(k) just keep getting smaller. Maybe it's a small world, after all. In boxing, the

little guys are providing big thrills. And the big guys are providing big reasons to watch the little guys instead.

New Low For Mi Vida Loca

Johnny Tapia's life has been such a horror show that even a comparison to the Baggalini's second marriage wouldn't do it justice. His outside-the-ring existence has been nothing but drugs, death, and destruction (which would make for a good slogan to tattoo on his body, if there was any room left). But strangely, the Johnny Tapia story just got more depressing with the news that he has been sentenced to reality-TV rehab.

As reality-TV shows go, VH1's *Celebrity Rehab With Dr. Drew* is certainly more appropriate for Tapia than, say *The Bachelor* or *America's Next Top Model*. In fact, now that he's 42 years old and pretty much stinks as a fighter, it's more appropriate for him than *The Contender*. But it's just plain upsetting. We're going to see more of Johnny crying (like we didn't get enough of that on *Real Sports*), we might see him going through extreme physical withdrawal, and, worst of all, there's about a 99 percent chance we aren't going to see him overcome his addictions. If nothing has beaten back his demons yet, what's the likelihood that Dr. Drew and a relentless video crew are the answer?

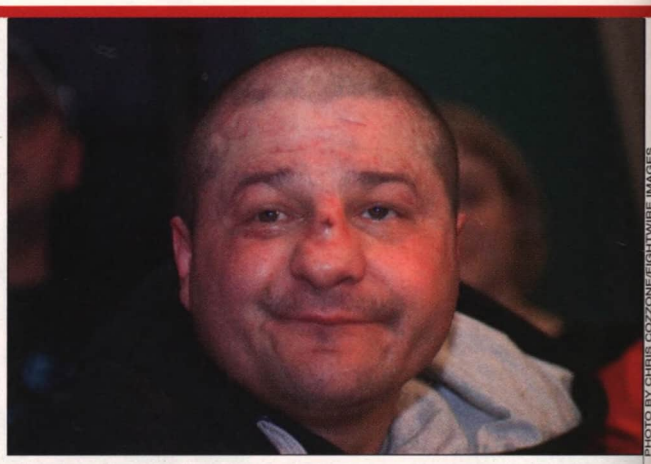


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Tapia: Looks ready for rehab

The Lame Name Game

The great nicknames enhance a fighter's image and aura: "The Executioner," "The Golden Boy," "The Raging Bull." The lousy nicknames simply fail to excite: "The Quiet Man," "U.S.S.," "The Big O." But nothing is worse than the nickname that can be completely and totally misinterpreted.

Meet undefeated Baltimore welterweight James "Keep 'Em Sleepin'" Stevenson.

We know what the nickname is *supposed* to mean. It's supposed to mean he's a powerpuncher who puts his opponents to sleep. And so far, he's done just that, knocking out all seven opponents he's faced.

When the Baggy Tooty Fresh-N-Fruity hears the nickname "Keep 'Em Sleepin'," he thinks immediately of a fighter who fails to excite. He pictures rows and rows of fans passed out with their heads on the shoulders of the passed-out patrons next to them. He pictures television sets still on at 3 a.m. after the viewer has been asleep on couch for four hours.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

"The Executioner": Now there's a nickname that works

The Monthly Mailbagg

Since everyone else is using performance-enhancers, it's time for a confession from the Baggasaurus: He pumped a lot of caffeine into his system to get through your painfully mundane and poorly written e-mails. Then he pumped five shots of bourbon into his system to make the e-mails seem interesting. When all was said and done, this was the closest he could find to a letter worth printing:

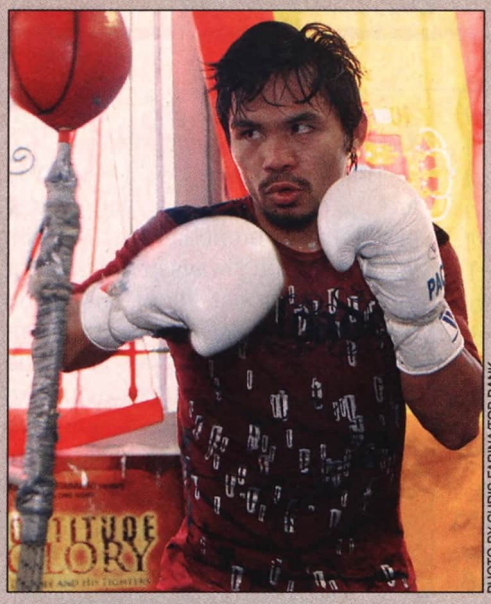


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Pac-Man training for Hatton

To Mr. Bagg-rack Obama, president of boxing writers of the United States,

Do you feel it is possible that a fighter can gain status on the P-4-P list if another fighter on the list avoids him? I think that may be the case with the consensus number one and two on the list. Juan Manuel Marquez has been calling out Manny Pacquiao and has been doing his part in beating championship-level competition in waiting on a third fight. If you are number two and in weight range of number one, what else can you as a fighter do to be number one?

Bryant Arnold

Bryant,

As the Baggnia-Herzogovina writes this, Pacquiao vs. Ricky Hatton is still a few days away, and the result there could of course affect the P-4-P. But that's really besides the point. The real reason the Baggophobia chose to run your e-mail is to respond and rip to shreds the notion that Pacquiao is "avoiding" Marquez. Why would you say Pacquiao is ducking Marquez? Because he's let one stinkin' year pass without fighting him again? Because he moved up in weight to make more money than he ever imagined possible against Hatton and Oscar De La Hoya? Yes, Marquez has been doing his part, but Pacquiao hasn't exactly been taking it easy himself.

If there's one thing common to most boxing fans, it's a total lack of patience. So the fight you want to see didn't happen immediately. That doesn't mean it won't happen, and it doesn't mean somebody is ducking somebody else. If a reader sends in one dumb e-mail, does that mean he's a moron? No (although it's certainly a possibility to consider). And if a fighter takes the most lucrative fights possible, does that mean he's ducking dangerous opposition? No. You can call Pacquiao a lot of things, but "afraid" isn't one of them.

Really, a nickname like that should go to a fighter like John Ruiz. And Stevenson would be better off as "The Quiet Man." (Or at least whoever came up with that "Keep 'Em Sleepin'" nickname would be.)

As far as DaBagg is concerned, a Sting is a Sting, regardless of what the judges say. Bussey may get the win on his record, but DaLuz gets the Stingray trophy on his mantelpiece. And frankly, a Stingray is worth more than the difference between being 11-17-2 and 12-16-2. ■

And The Stingray Goes To ...

A rare Stingray winner who didn't actually win the fight he was in, Robert DaLuz. Though he is typically DaLuz-er, with a record of 11-16-2 (9) coming in, not to mention a five-fight losing streak, on March 21 against undefeated junior featherweight Kieyon Bussey, DaLuzer deserved to be DaWinner and got screwed by DaJudges. DaLuz hurt Bussey on several occasions and clearly controlled the final four rounds of the six-rounder, but in Bussey's hometown of Pensacola, Florida, one judge scored it even and the other two somehow had it 58-56 for Bussey. The local fans booed the verdict, which tells you everything you need to know.

PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

DaLuz (left vs. Gary Stark) snags a Stingray

[Come Out Writing]

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

In Appreciation

Thank you, Oscar De La Hoya. You are one of the greatest fighters of your era. You ducked nobody, fought with your heart, and always gave value for money. But most importantly, you conducted yourself like a true champion in and out of the ring. In an age where trash-talking and disrespecting your opponents is the norm, you were a breath of fresh air and a wonderful ambassador for the sport I love so much. It is rare that a fighter goes out with his health intact and money in the bank, and if anyone deserves it, it is you.

I wish you all the best in retirement and good luck with Golden Boy Promotions, which is emerging as one of the best promotional companies around. Who said nice guys finish last?

TERRY DANIELS
terry.daniels@hotmail.com

Calzaghe vs. The Legends

"Battle Of The Legends" in the April 2009 issue was a great article, and the list of matches showed that some of today's fighters are very limited and overrated. Most of them would struggle against the previous era of champs. A prime example was the Joe Calzaghe-Michael Spinks fight. To be honest, I don't think Calzaghe could be given a serious chance against Spinks. The main difference is the quality of opposition the two men faced. Spinks fought all-time greats such as Mike Tyson, Larry Holmes, and Dwight Muhammad Qawi, whereas Calzaghe fought Chris Eubank, Jeff Lacy, and Mikkel Kessler—good but not great fighters. I agree with Kevin Kelley: The fact that Roy Jones and Bernard Hopkins could floor Calzaghe showed his limitations. Don't tell me either fighter, at their peak, wouldn't have beaten or stopped Joe. I do not mean to knock Calzaghe, who was a dedicated, honest professional, but I can't see him beating the likes of Archie Moore, Dick Tiger, and Billy Conn.

RICHARD HOVER
Stoke-on-Trent, UK

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Oscar De La Hoya trains for the Manny Pacquiao fight, which turned out to be "The Golden Boy's" final bout before announcing his retirement. Reader Terry Daniels writes to thank De La Hoya for all he's done for boxing during his historic career.

What Does It Mean?

Of late the term "pound-for-pound" is frequently used. Please define pound-for-pound. Are there any yardsticks? I can understand this term being used in weightlifting, but how does this apply to boxing? Please enlighten me.

RONNIE D'SILVA
Los Angeles, CA

Editor's note: Think of pound-for-pound as an arena of the mind where all fighters compete with one another regardless of their actual

fighting weights. The term was coined during the prime of Sugar Ray Robinson because while he was not the heavyweight champion of the world, he was clearly the best fighter in the world.

Decades later, when the various alphabet groups diluted the meaning of "world champion" by splitting the titles into many pieces, things reached the point where holding one of these paper titles meant virtually nothing. Therefore, in order to distinguish top fighters from the horde of so-called champions, fans, fighters, and the media began to put greater stock in the pound-for-pound ratings as an indicator of true excellence.

THE RING, however, does not believe that the pound-for-pound ratings are anywhere near as important as the divisional ratings, because they are based mainly on opinion, due to the fact many of those ranked would never fight each other due to their size difference. On the other hand, THE RING's divisional rankings are based on results within the individual weight classes, which is the only fair way to rate fighters.

Fountain Of Youth

I'll have two cases of whatever Bernard Hopkins, Shane Mosley, and Juan Manuel Marquez are drinking.

EDWARD MARCELENO
emarceleno@yahoo.com

New Spin On An Old Story

The recent documentary on the *Thrilla In Manila* might not at first glance seem to offer anything new. However, seeing the Ali-Frazier rivalry more from Smokin' Joe's perspective makes it well worth watching.

The idolatry that surrounds Ali makes it almost impossible to have a rational analysis of the real man. What we got from HBO was as raw and real as it gets. True, Frazier can't let it go (and perhaps he shouldn't considering how much he was de-humanized by Ali and even his own people), but Ali was a jerk more often than his many fans care to admit. It was also nice to see Ferdie Pacheco hasn't let it go either. He is the same pontificating, hanger-on jackass that he always was, but gets away with it because he has "Dr." before his name.

JIM WAYLAND
jim_wayland@hotmail.com

PHOTO BY JOHN PARA/WIREIMAGES

Forever young? Reader Edward Marceleno would like to partake of the same tonic that keeps Bernard Hopkins, Shane Mosley, and Juan Manuel Marquez fighting so well at such advanced ages.

Pavlik-Williams On The Horizon

I have a funny feeling that if Kelly Pavlik defeats "King" Arthur Abraham this fall—and that's a *big* if—then the boxing world will be putting a lot of pressure on Pavlik to fight Paul Williams, and what a fight that would be! Mark it down right now: Pavlik will win by a kayo similarly to the way he knocked out Jermain Taylor. The way you beat "The Ghost" is with a lot of lateral movement. Williams is not that type of fighter. Go Kelly!

DAVE KOVACS
Youngstown, Ohio

Stay Where You Are, Paul

I've just witnessed Paul Williams' masterful performance against Winky Wright. It confirmed what I've felt for the past two years: Williams should leave the welterweights alone. On the other hand, if he returns to 147 pounds, he will be making the same mistake that others before him have made. At this point, I don't think Williams would be strong at 147. His body has already gotten used to 160, which is closer to his natural weight. People often mistake a fighter's first weight class for his natural weight class, which is not always true.

TROY MORRIS
Cape Canaveral, FL

PHOTO BY RAY KASPROWICZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

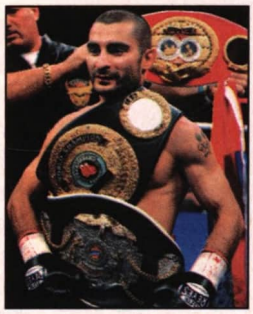
Paul Williams' dominating victory over Winky Wright prompted quite a bit of mail this issue, including letters from Dave Kovacs and Troy Morris, both of whom believe "The Punisher's" future is in the 160-pound division.

[Looking Ahead]

By Don Stradley

Can Darchinyan Beat "King Kong"?

Florida has hosted a number of fight cards recently, and on June 11 the Sunshine State welcomes a **Don King-Gary Shaw** co-promotion to be televised by Showtime. The main event pits hard-punching Armenian-Australian **Vic Darchinyan**, who still holds the junior bantamweight belts of the WBA, IBF, and WBC, against IBF bantamweight titlist **Joseph "King Kong" Agbeko**.



Darchinyan (above) steps up as a full-time bantamweight against IBF titlist Agbeko (below)

Darchinyan, 33-1-1 (26), has cut a swath of destruction of late, scoring violent stoppages of **Cristian Mijares** and **Jorge Arce**. If not for his shocking knockout loss to **Nonito Donaire** in 2007, we'd think there was something inhuman in 33-year-old Darchinyan's genetic makeup. Fans at the BankAtlantic Center in Sunrise are in for a battle, though Agbeko is not exactly a wilting wallflower.

"I think Joseph has a great chance to win," said Agbeko's manager, **Vinny Scolpino**. "Darchinyan is a tough guy and he can punch, but so can Joseph. So I think we have a great chance. Besides that, it's an awesome fight, a true fight. Nobody knows who's going to win."

From the Bronx, New York, by way of Ghana, Agbeko, 26-1 (22), won his title with a dominant seventh-round TKO of **Luis Alberto Perez** in 2007. Agbeko's only loss came in 2004, when he traveled to Germany and dropped a majority decision to **Wladimir Sidorenko**. Agbeko also has had long stretches of inactivity, including one caused by a case of malaria.

In his last bout, a competitive majority decision win over **William Gonzalez**, Agbeko chipped away at his southpaw challenger with right leads, leaving him bloody at the fight's end. Of course, southpaw Gonzalez can't be compared to southpaw Darchinyan, but at least Agbeko has some experience with lefties. Agbeko's style is to be aggressive, but he's also a good combination puncher and, in the parlance of old-time boxing writers, he shows some class. It's just that Darchinyan has a way of knocking the class right out of a guy. Look for some accidental head clashes, too, for Agbeko likes to leap in and Darchinyan doesn't back up.

Khan Moving Up

Just as things were heating up in the lightweight division, U.K. hero **Amir Khan**, 20-1 (15), has set his eye on the junior welterweights. On June 27, Khan will attempt to win the WBA belt worn by Ukraine's **Andreas Kotelnik**, 31-2 (13). The bout will be held at the O2 Arena in London, England, where Bolton native Khan is as popular as ever, especially since his win over the faded **Marco Antonio Barrera**. This isn't Khan's first bout at junior welterweight; he moved up to 140 in December 2006 to defeat **Rachid Drilzane**.

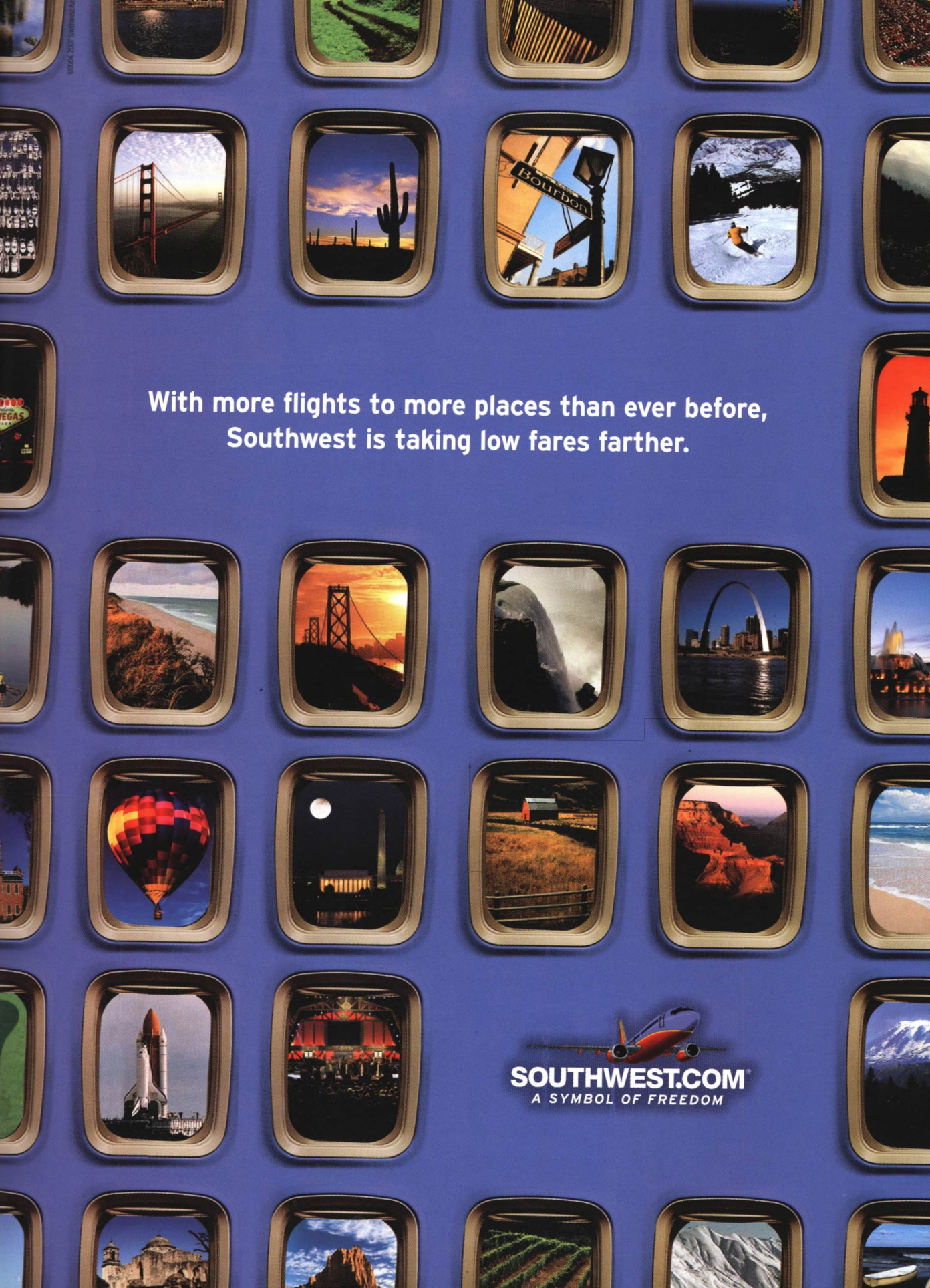
Can Khan claim his first major belt against WBA junior welter titlist Andreas Kotelnik?

Kotelnik won the title by defeating Britain's **Gavin Reese**, but bringing the belt back to England was probably less of a factor in making this fight than Kotelnik's lack of a big punch. Khan's surprising first-round knockout loss to **Breidis Prescott** has been forgiven, but not forgotten. No kayo artist, Kotelnik is a grinding, businesslike fighter, a marked contrast to the flashier, quick-handed Khan.

As Khan did in 2004, Kotelnik won an Olympic lightweight silver medal when he competed at the Sydney games in 2000. Unlike Khan, Kotelnik has never been knocked out. His losses have been close ones, including a disputed points loss to **Junior Witter** in 2005 and a split-decision loss to **Souleymane M'Baye** in 2004. Kotelnik and M'Baye fought to a draw in 2007.

Listen Up

On the same day as Khan-Kotelnik, WBA featherweight boss **Chris John** returns to America for a rematch with **Rocky Juarez**. The slick boxing John used fluid movement and a smart boxing game to build a lead against Juarez last February, but a late-round surge by Juarez convinced all three judges to score the bout a 114-114 draw. This time John and Juarez will meet at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, not Juarez' backyard in Houston ... Fans in Rama, Ontario, will see action on June 26 when Canadian favorite **Steve Molitor** meets **Heriberto Ruiz**. Super featherweight Molitor is coming off a knockout loss to **Celestino Caballero** and will have his hands full with veteran Ruiz ... On July 25, Top Rank brings a doubleheader to Mexico featuring **Edwin Valero** against **Breidis Prescott** and **Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.** against an opponent not yet named at press time. ■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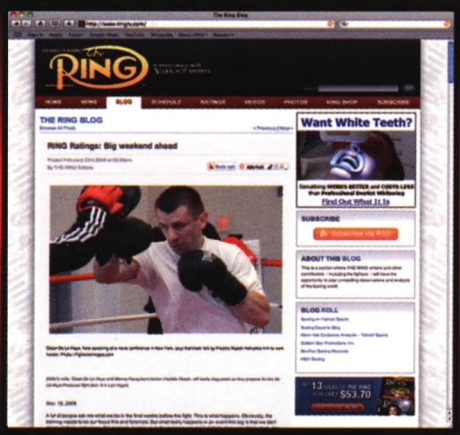

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